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COMPUTER +video GAMES



FREE SPECCY & 64 DEMOS

R-TYPE
Master Blaster!

WIN AN R-TYPE COIN-OP.

NINJA II — THE OFFICIAL MAP.

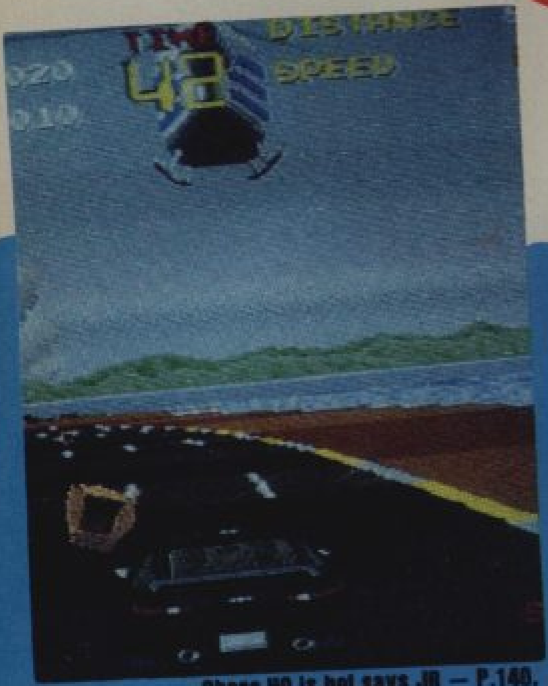
REVIEWED: ST ELITE, PACMANIA, MICROPROSE SOCCER AND BLOOD BOWL FRP.

WINNER STAYS ON ROUND II: MISSION MICROPROSE.

PLUS: MONEY OFF ST & AMIGA VERSIONS

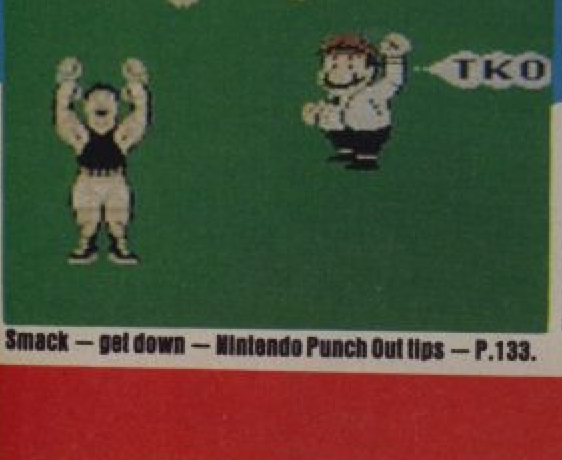

THE GREATEST ACTION PACKED
JAMES BOND 007
GAME EVER!
Goddam it boy! That darned Mister Bond bin at it agin'. He done and wrecked twelve o' my bran' noo po-lice cars, broke all da speed laws o' tha' county an' now he's causin' mayhem in that boat a' his! If ah ketch any o' yoo boy's or gals a' followin' his exam-ple now, you'se better be watchin' yo' ar@★.
Shee-oot!
Available from 20 October 1988
Spectrum
CBM 64
Amstrad
Amiga
Atari ST
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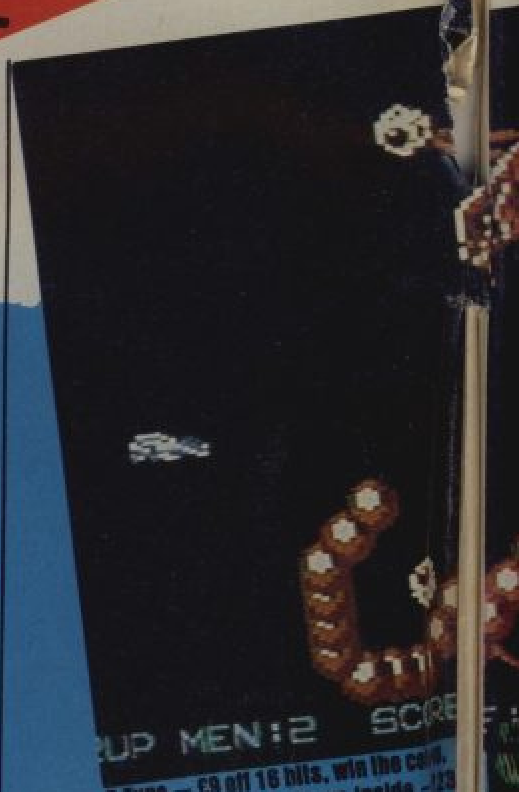


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Blood Bowl — yankee footie gets the FRP treatment P.74.



Smack — get down — Nintendo Punch Out tips — P.133.



R-Type — £9 off 16 bits, win the coin, plus first reviews inside —P.23


Microprose soccer — a great British game — P.28.


Speedball — another C+VG hit from Bitm[ap B]ros —

Editor: Eugene Lacey, Deputy Editor: Julian Rignall. Sub Editor: Seamus St. John. Staff Writer: Matt Bielby. Art Editor: Andrea Walker. Advertisement Manager: Garry Williams. Sales Executiv[e] ... an J...



Don't miss...

You are holding the best computer games magazines published in the UK this year.

Don't miss part 1 of the official Ninja II map, Winner Stays On, and stacks of red hot exclusives — including ST Elite, Power Drome, Speeball, and Live and Let Die.

Make sure your mag has a free tape with a playable demo of R-Type for the 64 and Spectrum. When you have played these you may decide that you would like to win the coin-op. We are proud to offer you this opportunity.

We regret that C+VG has to go up by 10p this month but we think you will agree that we are still ten times better value than all our imitators.



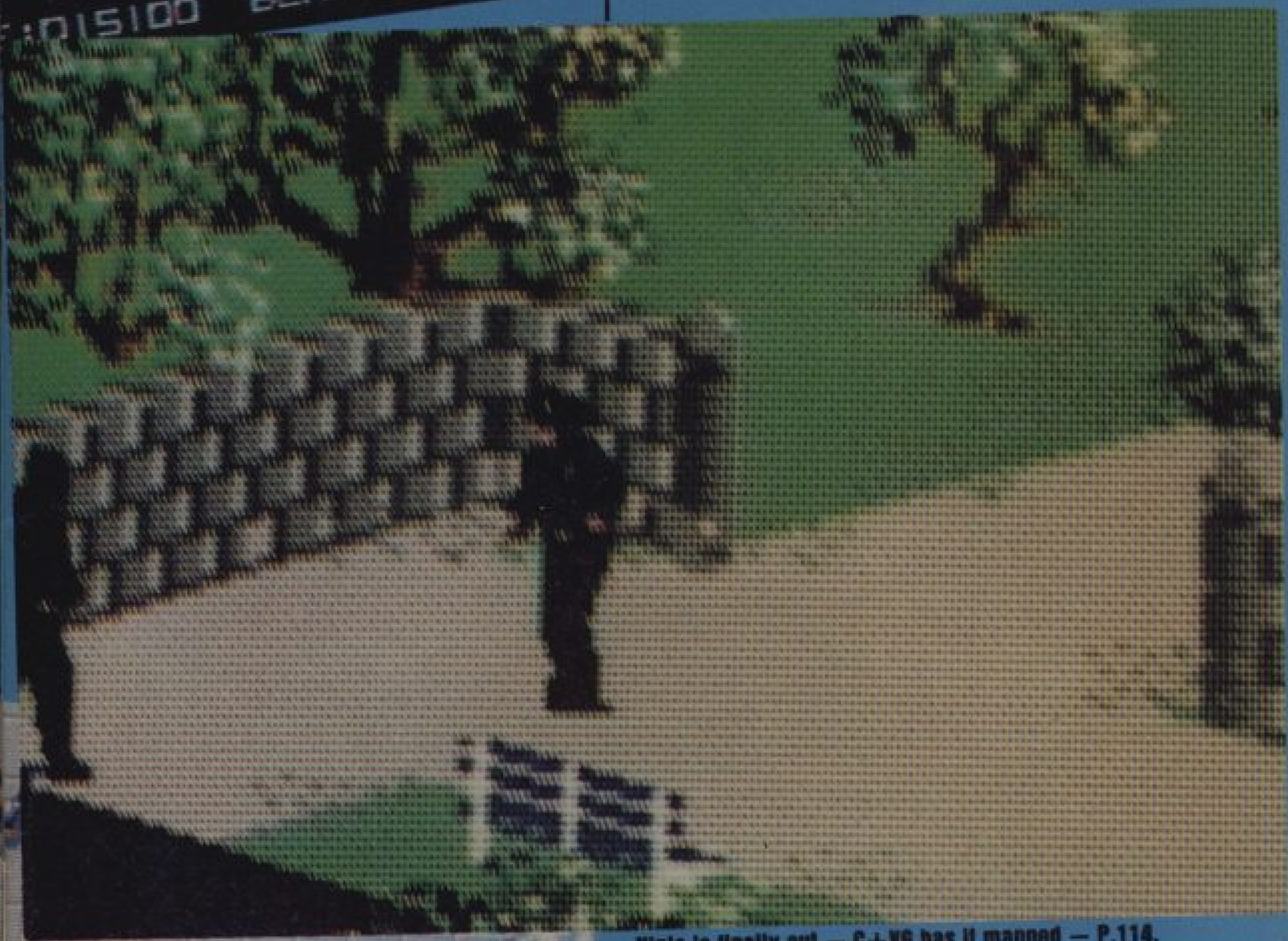
Will this Winner Stay On? P.125.



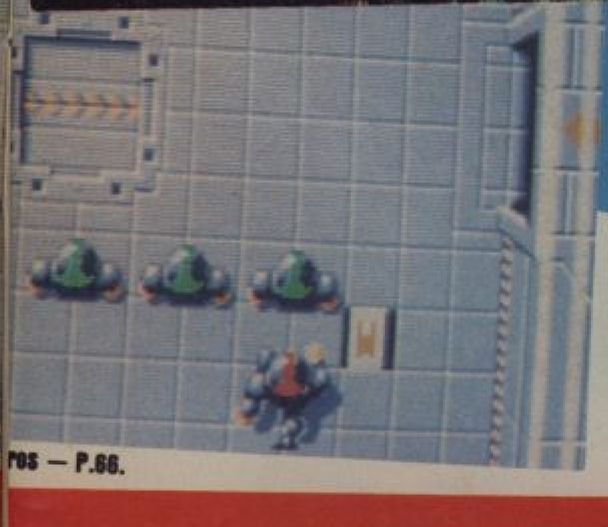
Minson in Maryland with Microprose — P.82.



ST and Amiga Elite — C+VG first again — P.36.



Ninja is finally out — C+VG has it mapped — P.114.



ros — P.66.



Thunderblade — first review on the Sega — P.130.



Scrum down in Fax — P.8.

an Jones. Advertisement Production: Lora Clark. Publisher: Terry Pratt. Editorial and Advertisement Offices: Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AD. Tel: 01-251 6222.

TIGER ROAD™

An ancient tale from ancient China ... land of mystery and intrigue, birthplace of martial arts disciplines. Ruthless Ryu Ken Oh is laying waste the countryside, enslaving children as brainwashed footsoldiers in his army of barbarians. It is you, Lee Wong – supreme student of the Oh Rin Temple – that has been selected to put a stop to this savagery.

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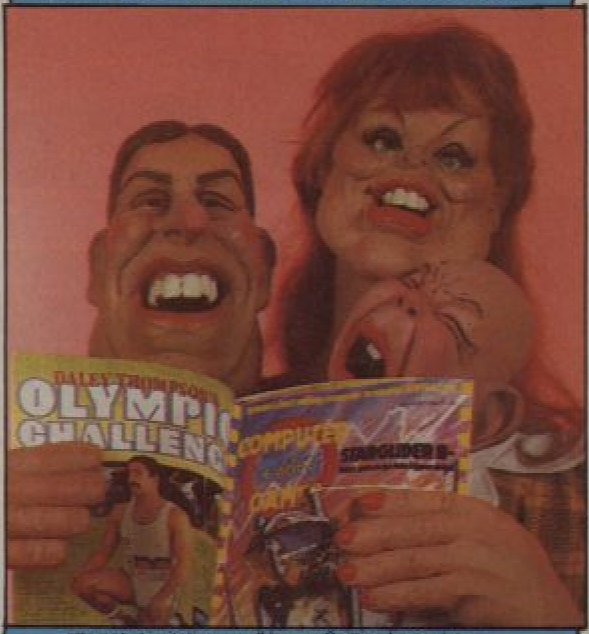
Fax

Domark Spitting Image Compo

To tie in with the imminent release of Domark's scandalous, outrageous, ever-so-cheeky Spitting Image game – see FAX last month – comes the scandalous, outrageous, ever-so-cheeky Spitting Image competition! As you can see Andy and Fergy and baby Bea love C + VG – so much that by royal decree they have allowed some lucky reader to be immortalised in latex by the Spitting Image crew just as they have been.

Yes! Yes! Yes! You too could have your features brutally ignored and your slightly squiffy nose, or rather sticky-out-ears cruely caricatured. Impress your friends, scare the cat, it is without doubt the ugliest prize we have ever offered on C + VG.

Rather luckier runners up will find that they don't have to undergo the arduous torture of visiting the Spitting Image studios to see how their puppet will be made, and instead will be able to rest comfortably at home with a mug of horlicks and some freebie Spitting Image books, videos and the like. So what's the catch, you ask? Well, as ever, you're right, there is one, you suspicious little lot. As you hopefully haven't noticed, this compo or one very much like it is being run in many of the major magazines. We all have to produce a champion, it seems, and then present our champ down at the Limehouse studios for a quick



attempt at imitating a well known Spitting Image latex.

Embarassing, we know, but worth it for the puppet, ne c'est pas? Best impression on the day gets the big prize, though I'm sure no-one will go away mad, as they say. So how do I enter, you ask? We want you to send in a caricature on paper of one of the C + VG staff – just to give the rest of us a laugh, basically. We've all appeared in print at one point or the other more or less, but if you've never seen any of us, the picture you'll find on the T-shirt offer page may be of help. It could be the laughably fat Garry Williams, the pouting Eugene, the stork's nest hair style of Jaz or the gorgeous Lora. Or you could choose one of the others – we're all fair game. Send it, with your name and address and the form below, to: C + VG Spitting Image Compo, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

SPITTING IMAGE COMPO

Name..

Address......................................

..

Age..

My cartoon is of.........................

Hurry, hurry, hurry!





Superman Vs Batman

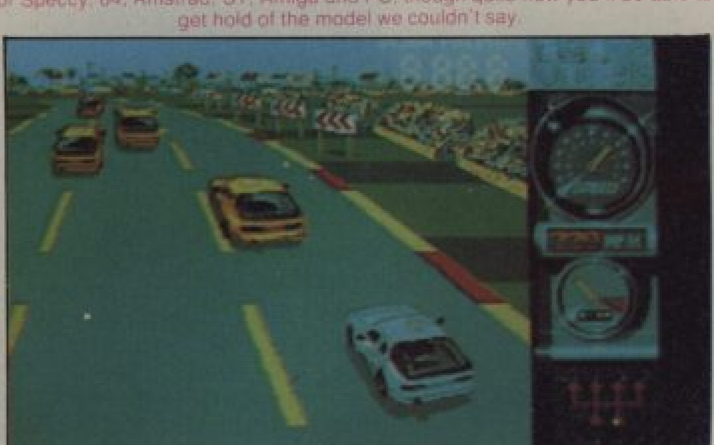
No contest, really, you might think. After all, Batman is only a big bloke in a funny suit, whereas Superman is a bona fide son of Krypton, able to leap tall buildings with a single bound.

In the computer games stakes, however, things could be rather different. Tynesoft's Superman has some nice scenes representing comic book panels complete with speech bubbles, but Supes himself looked rather stilted in some bits and gameplay resembled a multitude of shoot-'em-ups. Batman from Ocean, on the other hand, has some lovely character animation, with the Penguin's waddle and our hero's stiff, determined posture captured to a (comic) tee. From the look of things, Catwoman and the manic Joker also appear.

Both games are £9.95/£14.95 on C64 and £24.95 Amiga, but on most other systems Bats comes in a pound or two cheaper – and with icon-driven menues and multiload to boot.

944 Turbo Cup

One of French software house Loriciels' most determined attempts to crack the elusive British market starts this month, with the English language version of their continental hit 944 Turbo Cup. Based around their real racing Porsche driven by "big" name Rene Metge (who?), it comes in France complete with Dinky style model car, though plans to do the same here are going down less than well with the big chain stores. Based on real French courses, and with a wealth of background detail around the track, Turbo Cup is at least unique amongst driving games in that you can tell what sort of car you're in. Should hit the shops by some time in November for Speccy, 64, Amstrad, ST, Amiga and PC, though quite how you'll be able to get hold of the model we couldn't say.



Giana no More

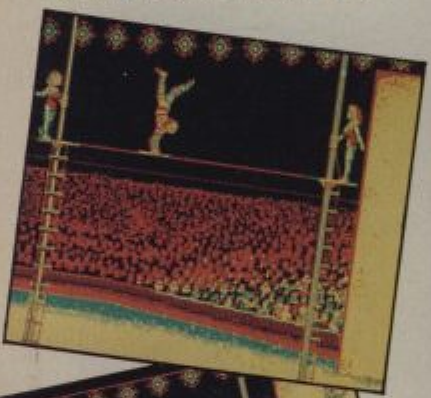
Too late for inclusion for last month's ish came news from German Correspondent Carsen Borgmeir that Giana sisters in the Future World will no longer be released. The game was finished and all reading for shipping when Nintendo stepped in at the eleventh hour with the threat of legal action.

Normally ultra keen to protect their licenses, Nintendo objected to the Rainbow Arts game due to its (undeniable) similarity to the famous Super Mario Brothers.

They have a point, though quite why they didn't react so strongly to the first Giana incarnation remains unclear . . .

The Circus Comes to Town

After years of neglect in the computer games world (ahhh) circus games come out of the wilderness in force this autumn. Martech's **Circus, Circus** includes six events from the Human cannonball to tight-rope walking, with lion taming thrown in for a bit of variety. Out on the Spectrum at £9.99 cass/£14.99 disk. Meanwhile, up there in Newcastle, Tynesoft has **Circus Games** for ST, Amiga and PC (£24.95), and C64 and Speccy (£9.95 cass, £14.95/£12.95 disk). More trapeze and tightrope, but a bit of trick riding and tiger-taming thrown in for good measure, it shows the appeal of the ring hasn't died just yet.





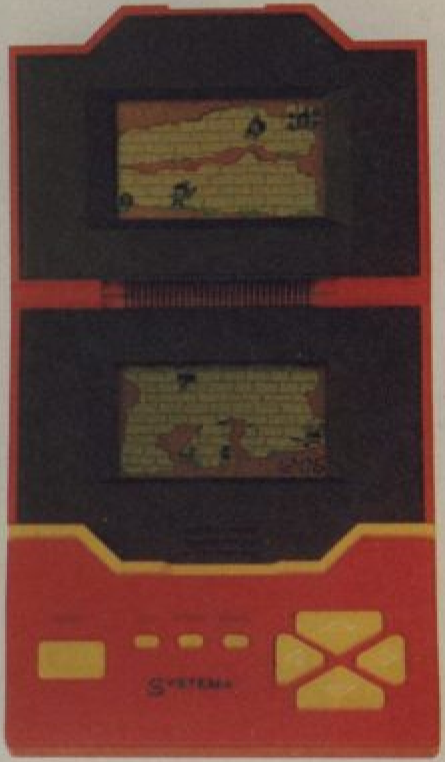


Coin-ops Converts for '88

Telecomsoft has just announced its big three for early'89; conversions of coin-op hits *Mr Hell, Bubble Bobble 2* and — this is the big one — *P47.* With the original *Bubble Bobble* being a firm fave here at C+VG and Mr Hell's fat little cartoon helicopter being one of the cutest and most addictive of this year's crop of shoot 'em ups, it looks like they may have bought some very good licenses indeed. However, the World War 2 shoot 'em up P-47, horizontally scrolling and with two player option looks like the joker in the pack. With a duel mission to knock out enemy fighters as well as their ground installations in your big bombers, it looks like ideal conversion fodder, and must be one to watch out for in the months after Christmas.







Pocket Coin-ops

. . . well, nearly. Lucky Japanese commuters may be able to play their PC Engine amongst a pool of wires and mini-TV monitors on the bus to work, but you'll have to put up with the next best thing: these mini-LCD pocket games. Well, at least they're cheaper.

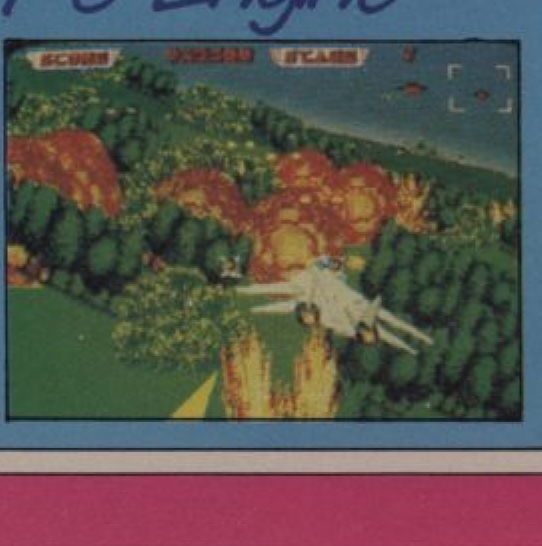
Choose between Formula One, Soccer, Tennis, driving and the imaginatively named Space Adventure in watch, clock and folding double-screened form. Okay, so they're simple, but they're handy and come with sound effects, two levels of play and two player option in many cases. All from Systema, and for only a few quid too.

Forget the PC Engine

. . . there's something else out there even better!!

In his never ending quest for superlatives, our man with his eye on Japan, the inimitable Tony T, has come up with a hot poop at yet another Japanese-only wonder machine.

This one is the Sharp 68000x microcomputer, it's brand new, it's only got a handful of games available for it, and by what we've seen seems to truly of arcade quality. Space Harrier and Afterburner (shown) have never looked better, not even down the arcades . . . or so they say. Rest assured, just as with the PC Engine we'll bring you the facts as we get them . . .



Fax

Appletisers

You could have been forgiven for ignorning The Big Apple, a new software label that first surfaced months ago promising big things, but released only one game. They're hitting their stride now, though, with Lasertrain (the tale of an alien attack on an Intercity!), *Harrier Strike Mission 2* and adventure game *The Fool's Errand* all due for immediate release, and *Thud Ridge* (a Vietnam flight sim) *with Greased Lightning,* '60s hot rod street racing, waiting in the wings. We haven't played any of them properly yet, but it will be interesting to see what develops.

Fighting Falcon



If the world needs another a flight sim, then a plane worthy of such treatment would have to be the US F16 – a fighter and a half as air force types are always telling us. Good job then that Digital Integration has decided to grace ST, IBM (£24.95) and C64 (£19.95 disk/14.95 cass) monitors with one such sim. F16 Combat Pilot which they claim US Airforce experts had a hand in designing, will later be available on Amiga, Amstrad and Spectrum.

Racing Hoppers Compo

More fun by far than 4x4 Off Road Racing (see review) are these Racing Hopper sets from Action GT. These slot racing sets feature boulders to dodge, tunnels and lakes to negotiate and mountains to avoid making things tough along the eighteen foot track. They're fun, but they ain't exactly cheap (£59.99) so it's just as well we have a couple of sets to give away, isn't it? Answer the questions below, and one could be yours. Send entries to Racing Hoppers Comp, C+VG, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3AU.



Name ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Phone ____________________

Question 1) What Formula One team will Nigel Mansell be driving for next season

Question 2) What famous British car manufacturers returned to motor racing recently and won the last Le Mans 24 hour race?



Munster Mash

It's not unusual to see games based on big box office smash movies such as Ocean signing Robo Cop, or even novels but cult TV shows? Again Again Alternative's new full price label, have produced a game based around the lovable family of werewolves, vampires and monsters currently showing on C4. Available on 8 bit at £9.99 ST (£19.99) and Amiga (£24.99) it'll be shambling our way in about a month.

Charts

ATARI ST TOP TEN

1	Bomb Jack – Encore
2	Football Manager 2 – Addictive
3	Battleships – Encore
4	Gauntlet – Kixx
5	Air Wolf – encore
6	ACE? Cascade
7	Frank Brunos Boxing – Encore
8	Out Run – Sega/US Gold
9	D. Thomp Oly. Chall. – Ocean
10	S. Davis Snooker – Blue Ribbon

Alternative, Encore and US Gold all make advances as publishers, at the expense of Firebird, Mastertronic and Codemasters. Daley Thompson makes a particularly strong showing in the overall chart.

ATARI ST

1	STOS Game Creator
2	Virus – Firebird
3	Super Hang On – Electric Dreams
4	L'derboard Birdie – Access/US G.
5	Empire Strikes Back – Domark
6	Outrun – Sega/US Gold
7	Overlander – Elite
8	Gunship – Microprose
9	Gauntlet 2 – US gold
10	Sinbad & the Throne – C'ware

STOS, Super Hang On, Leaderboard and Sinbad are all new entries, with 16 bits sales increasing, despite the general drop off in buying due to the end of school holidays.

AMIGA TOP FIVE

1	Carrier Command – Rainbird
2	Interceptor – Electronic Arts
3	Bionic Commando – Capcom/Gol
4	Platoon – Ocean
5	Menace – Ocean

New entries Platoon and Menace threaten the big two, which have merely swapped first and second places this month.




LAST
NINJA 2
AVAILABLE FROM THE END OF SEPTEMBER ON C64, SPECTRUM & AMSTRAD
Back with a Vengeance!
Born in a time of peace, lived in the time of war; the shadow warrior returns. Leaping the abyss of time he comes to fulfil his destiny!
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Fax

Barrels of Laughs

Plenty of shootings beatings and kickings and so on in a couple of Firebird releases for Christmas – Blazing Barrel, and Exploding Fist+. While the latter is just more of the beat 'em up action we've come to expect – the computer putting you up against whole bunches of ninja–Blazing Barrels takes the currently unfashionable Wild West as it's theme. A platform shoot 'em up like an antique version of Rolling Thunder, it's the old story of one man cleaning up a town gone bad (ST/Amiga £19.99).





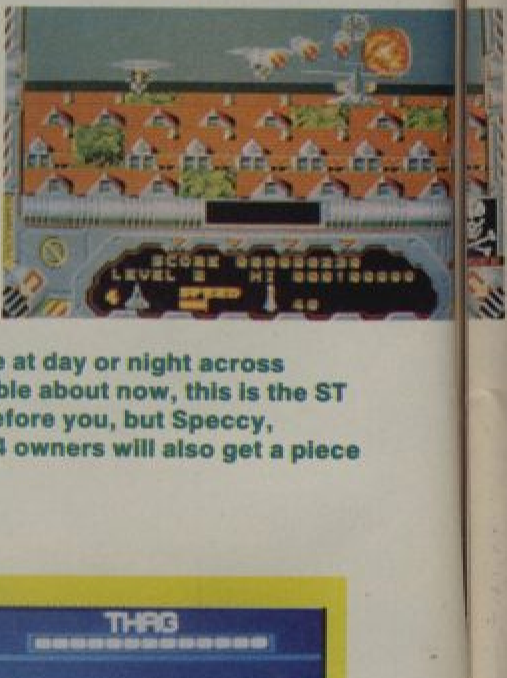
Surreal Thing

Possibly the strangest, most surreal, and in many ways most impressive single game on display at the PC show recently was Rainbird's Weird Dreams . . . a program that was just plain bizarre. Featuring the best character design and most disturbing atmosphere we've seen in recent times, the game takes the player through a series of puzzles as you fight your way out of a crazed nightmare into the waking world. Rose bushes grow teeth and snap at you, footballs split into grotesque mouths and no one and nothing can be trusted. Artist Herman Serrano must be a star in the making! At £24.99 for ST, Amiga and PC, with C64 Cassette/disk at £14.99/19.99 it looks like a MUST buy for Christmas.





Hellfire Club



Hoping to steal some of Thunder Blade's, erm, thunder is Martech's newie for all popular formats, Hellfire Attack, Piloting a Super Cobra-style attack chopper, it's a shoot 'em up that takes place at day or night across varying terrain. Available about now, this is the ST version you can see before you, but Speccy, Amstrad, Amiga and 64 owners will also get a piece of the action.

E.A. Returns

After months of near silence Electronic Arts returns to the game in a big way – just look at all the ads they've placed! Caveman Ugh.Lympics has to be the worst pun of the month, but scores for topicality. Dinosaur racing, T-Rex pole vaulting and whacking each other on the heads with big sticks all appear, as does a whole load of joystick waggling. Available on C64 disk at £14.95 about now.

Others for the smaller Commodore include Modem Wars – a strategy game which allows 64 owners to link up with IBM and Apple II users –, Deathlord, which is Dungeons and Dragon's-ish and sports sim Powerplay Hockey.

Add to these their games developed by UK artists, such as Fusion, Powerdrome (see review this ish) and Games Workshop – license Chainsaw Warrior, and you've got a pretty strong line up, ne c'est pas?



I'll take Manhattan

Fans of beat 'em ups like Target Renegade and so on will have cause to take note of the first UK release from French software house Silmarils. Manhattan Dealers takes a peculiarly gallic angle to it's story of New York drug barons and one man's fight to bring them down. Bikers, muggers, ninjas





and assorted psychos give you the runaround across numerous screens as you attempt to destroy the drug supply. ST, Amiga and PC owners should be able to purchase it in November (£19.99 ST, £24.99 others), while Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad versions will be out in the new year.

This Sporting Life

Tired of Soccer Management games? Then how about a slight variation, as we enter the world of "money and courage" in Rugby League Boss? It's your decision to buy or sell players, switch clubs and cook da books (!) to try and win the cup, but there are plenty of hard men out to stop you. Your ST may never be so gritty again (£14.95).



Future Shocker

About the most shocking thing about **Dark Futures** is that it looks to be the only cars-with-guns game of recent months not to lie under the shadow of a monstrous law suit. In fact, it could be a great introduction to fantasy role playing, being one of the simpler games (it still comes with a wacking great rule book though) and featuring a track and little plastic cars you can paint up. Based unashamedly on Mad Max, it's £14.99 for the starting box, though we would suggest half the fun would come from customising little die-cast motors to add to the car wars . . .





Queer Name

Maybe it's because they're French and they just don't know . . . Ubi-Soft feature strongly in their Crimbo line up a game "rejoicing" in the unlikely name of Puffy's Saga. As Puffy you must lead your girlfriend Puffyn out of an alien maze of death traps and hidden passages.

Companion titles include medieval adventure Iron Lord and Skateball on all popular formats, with ST/Amiga/C64 space adventure, which sounds not unlike Captain Blood.

AMSTRAD TOP TEN

1	Bomb Jack Encore
2	Gauntlet – Kixx
3	Battleships – Encore
4	ATV Simulator – Code Masters
5	Air Wolf – Encore
6	Kik Start 2 – Mastertronic
7	Beach Buggy Simulator – Firebird
8	Rocky Horror Show – Alternative
9	Football Manager 2 – Addictive
10	Yogi Bear – Alternative

Only one full price game in the chart (Footie Manager 2), with last time's number one (Stunt Bike Sim) dropping to 13.

C64 TOP TEN

1	Daley Thompson's – Ocean
2	Battleships – Encore
3	Football Manager 2 – Addictive
4	Hawkeye – Thalamus
5	Rally Driver – Alternative
6	Track Suit Manager – Goliath
7	S. Davis Snooker – Blue Ribbon
8	Yogi Bear – Alternative
9	Bomb Jack – Encore
10	Dizzy – Codemasters

Daley vaults to the top while Hawkeye, Track Suit and Bomb Jack drop, Skooldaze and Pro Skateboard Sim look set to enter next week.

SPECTRUM TOP TEN

1	Football Manager 2 – Addictive
2	On the Bench – Cult
3	Bomb Jack – Encore
4	Skooldaze – Alternative
5	European Five a Side – Firebird
6	Track Suit Manager – Goliath
7	Daley Thompson's – Ocean
8	Battleships – Encore
9	ACE – Cascade
10	Outrun – Sega/US Gold

Highest climber On the Bench joins Footie Manager 2 at the top of the charts, while Skooldaze enters at number 4. Daley and Track Suit Manager are the other only full pricers in the top ten.



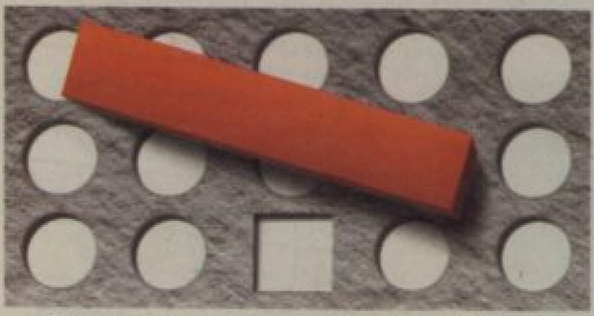
Weapons expert, grenade expert, marksman.
To handle the weapons above, today's Infantryman needs a lot more up top.



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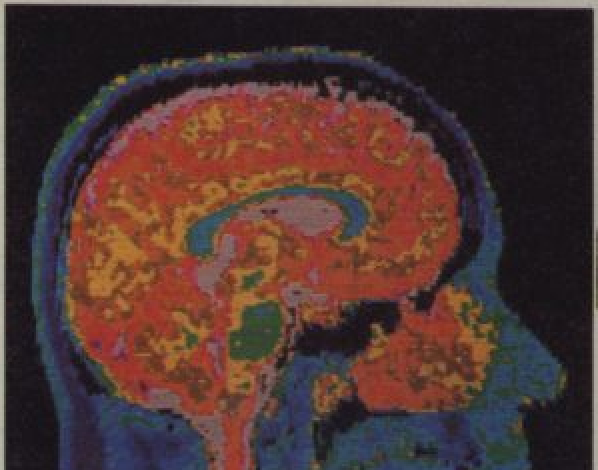


This Instrument Technician is responsible for £2 million worth of technology and the safety of 8 soldiers.

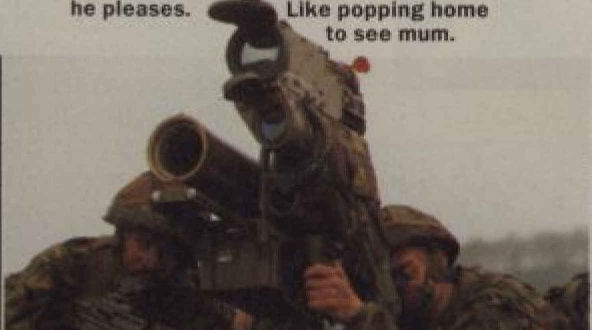
Every soldier can take a paid holiday to do with as he pleases. Like popping home to see mum.



The Lynx. Twin Rolls Royce engines. Cruise missiles. The world's



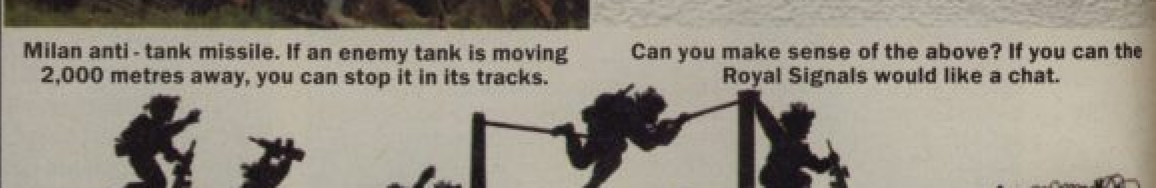
You'll be using your brain cells as well as your limbs. We work with some of the world's most complex equipment.



Milan anti - tank missile. If an enemy tank is moving 2,000 metres away, you can stop it in its tracks.



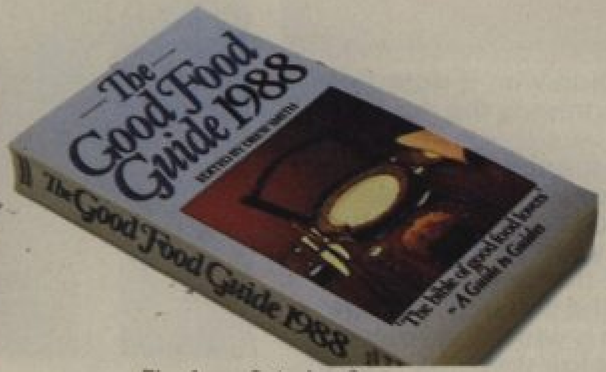
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Our dreaded
Sergeant Major. His bark is worse than his bite.

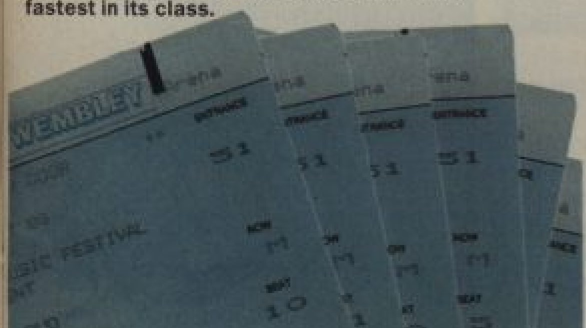


speed 120 knots. 8 wire-guided anti-tank
fastest in its class.

The enemy is directly in front of you.
Your section is
moving across open country.
Do you move in.

A. Single file B. Extended line C. Arrow formation

Answer: C. Arrow formation.



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Our best cannot afford to be second best.

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R-T

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► **SUPPLIER: ELECTRIC DREAMS.**
► **VERSION TESTED: SPEC/ST.**
► **REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.**

Irem's *R-Type* has been a major talking point of the arcade fraternity for the past year – and it's easy to see why. With its combination of superb playability and amazingly repellent alien graphics, it's one of the best arcade shoot 'em ups around.

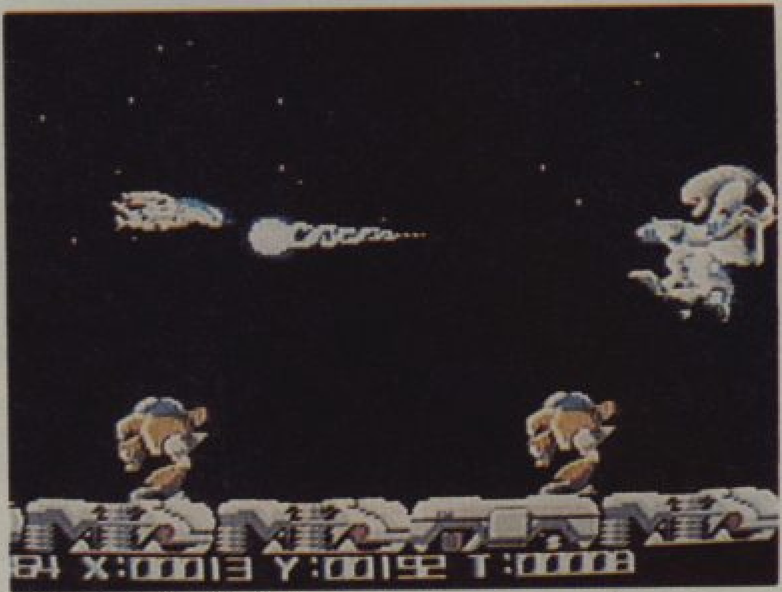
Electric Dreams snapped up the conversion rights at the beginning of the year in a deal that was similar to an F-plan diet (they shed pounds and pounds in a very short space of time), and since then have been working on home computer versions. Now the fruits of their labours are about to be released . . .

For those unfamiliar with the game (where on Earth have you been?), *R-Type* is a horizontally scrolling blaster in the traditional mould. There are eight different levels, and at the end of each is a giant guardian who is defeated to progress to the next level.

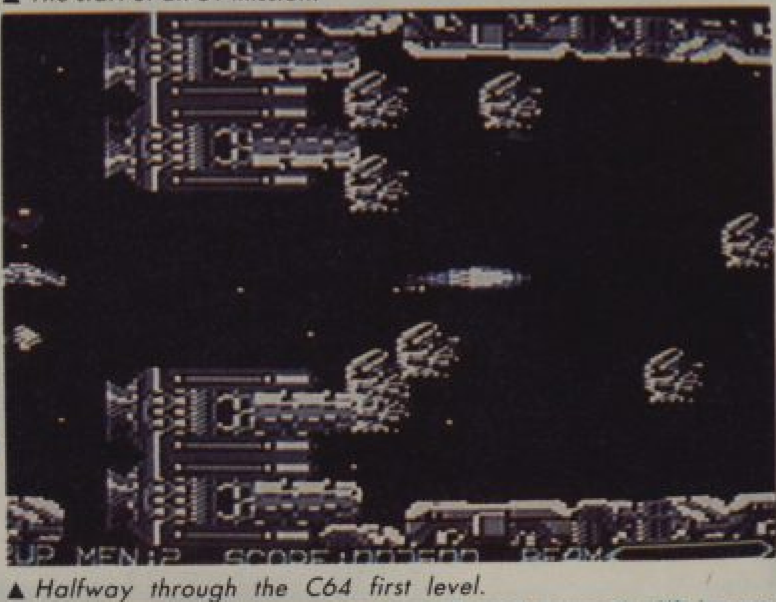
The scenario is basically an excuse for a suicide pilot to take on a mighty enemy force single-handedly; in this case the evil Bydo Empire, which is wreaking havoc across the universe. Flying a unique R-9 type assault craft and armed with lasers and whatever extra weapons that can be picked up during the mission, it's the player's task to penetrate all eight levels of Bydo's home planet and confront and destroy him on the final screen.

The R-9's laser cannons are capable of rapid bursts of low-charge laser fire. Keeping the fire button depressed "beams up" the charge, indicated by a bar at the bottom of the screen, and when the fire button is released a powerful laser bolt shoots across the screen, destroying all in its wake. The only problem with this is while the charge beams up, the R-9 can't fire, and is therefore defenceless.

The first level pits the R-9 against the Bydo mechanical defence system. Attack waves of Bydo craft pose little problem, but soon ground walkers appear which require repeated shots to kill. Battle on and the first of the highly useful POWs fly on. When these grey, rotund craft are destroyed they leave behind an icon

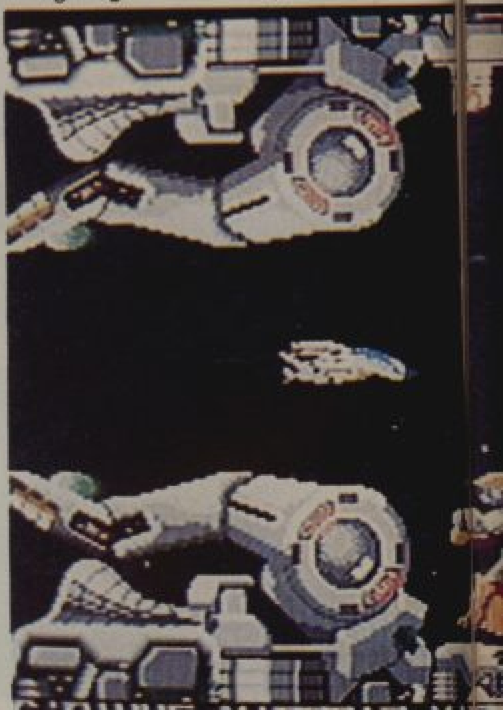


▲ *The start of an ST mission.*


▲ *Halfway through the C64 first level.*



▲ *Battling through spinning defences.*

▼ *Fighting a beautifully-drawn ST enemy.*


R-T

YPE

which is picked up to add an extra feature to the R-9. The first and most important is the pod, a spherical object which can be attached to the front or back of the craft, or left floating free to blast oncoming craft. If it's attached to the craft it provides protection from enemy bullets, and also destroys anything it touches – although for tougher craft it takes a few seconds for the destruction process to take place. If the R-9's fusilage is touched by another craft, bullet or the scenery, however, it's destroyed.

Other extra weapons take the form of homing missiles (two launch automatically every few seconds and hunt down and destroy an enemy target), speed-ups, helix lasers, reflective lasers, vertically-firing power bolts and drones which float above and below the R-9 adding extra width to its firepower. A fully-equipped craft is an awesome fighting machine – but it takes time to build up that kind of arsenal, especially as all extra weapons are lost when the R-9 is hit!

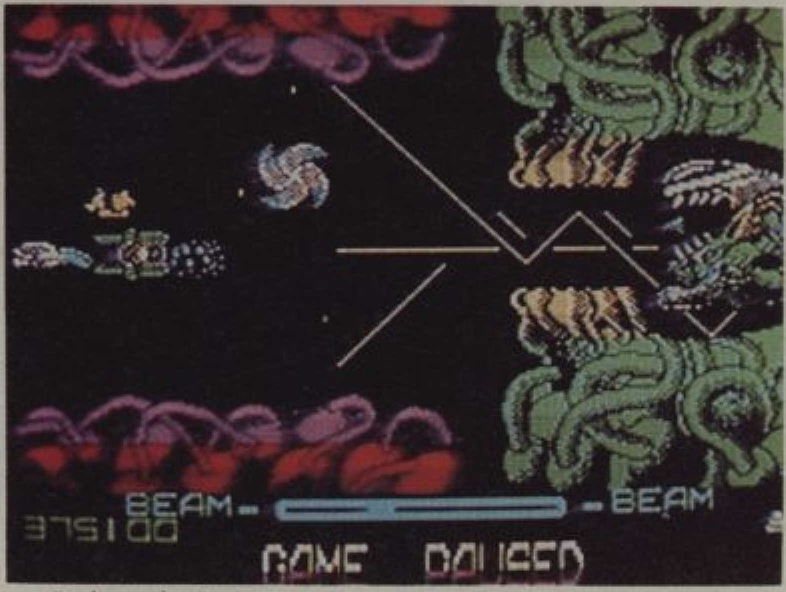
Halfway through the first level is a spinning circular barrier of gun emplacements; blast this and there's a myriad of planes, walkers, missile-firing robots and laser towers to defeat before the guardian is encountered. This screen-high horror looks similar to the Alien in the eponymous films, and has a deadly indestructible tail which swishes around in a very threatening manner. After a few seconds a horrid green face bursts out of the alien's stomach and spits spinning disks at the ship; dodge these and shoot the face with a couple of full-beam shots to kill it.

The next level takes the R-9 through a diabolical alien garden populated by huge scorpions, plants that spit pulsating organisms and, at the end, a huge snake that slithers through the auricles and ventricles of a giant beating heart. At the top of the heart is a growth covered by a protective skin. Occasionally the skin peels back, exposing the growth so that it can be blasted – several accurate hits destroy the heart and the snake.

A massive mothership makes up the third level, and the player guides the R-9 around it shooting out the bristling gun emplacements and laser cannons. The giant ship's weak spot lies in its piston-like organ situated at the top. It slides in and out, and is vulnerable when fully extended – but it's well defended so some pretty nifty play is needed to get in the fatal shots.

Level four pits the R-9 against hordes of flying alien craft, some of which leave trails of dots which have to be cleared out of the way before the ship can continue safely. Just

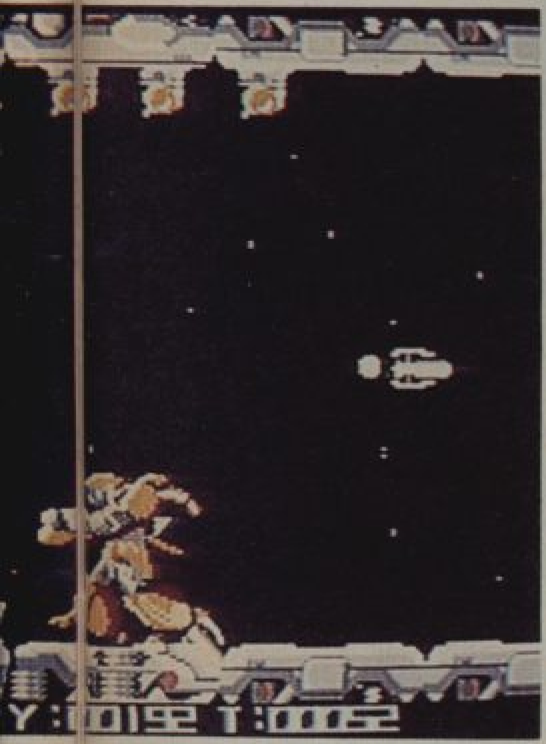
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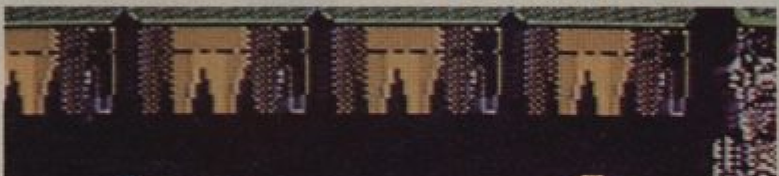


▲ *Bydo on the Spectrum.*


▲ *First level guardian – ST.*

enemy.





▲ *Another Spectrum guardian.*

YPE



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A LEGEND IN GAMES SOFTWARE

R-TYPE

Reviews

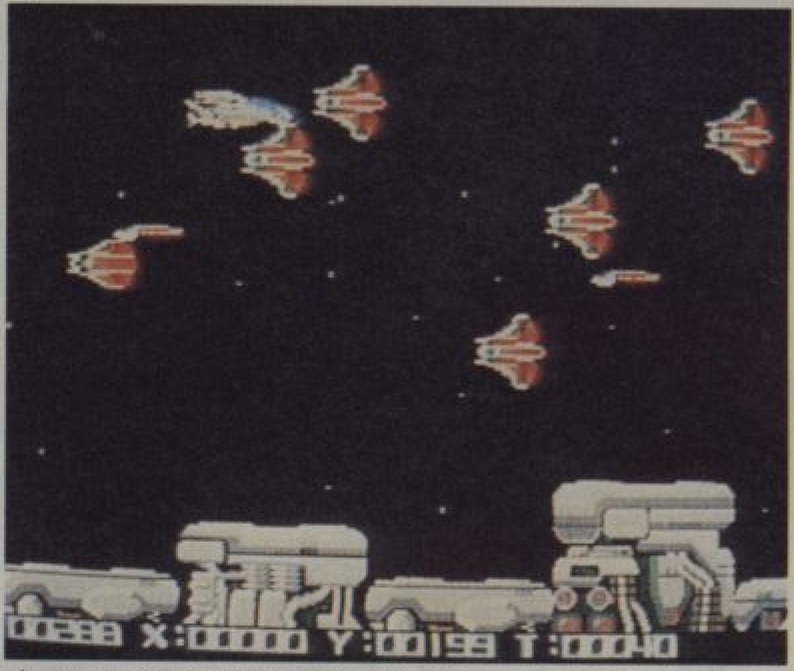
before the guarian appears, a whole screen of these dots has to be cleared – easy if you've got a pod; tricky if you haven't. The guardian is a big red ship that splits into three and moves slowly around the screen. Each section is destroyed by repeatedly shooting its blue docking port.

Level five is where the going starts to get very tough, with huge snakes crawling from dense vegetation. At the end is a rock-class ship which breaks up under repeated fire, deadly boulders flying at all angles.

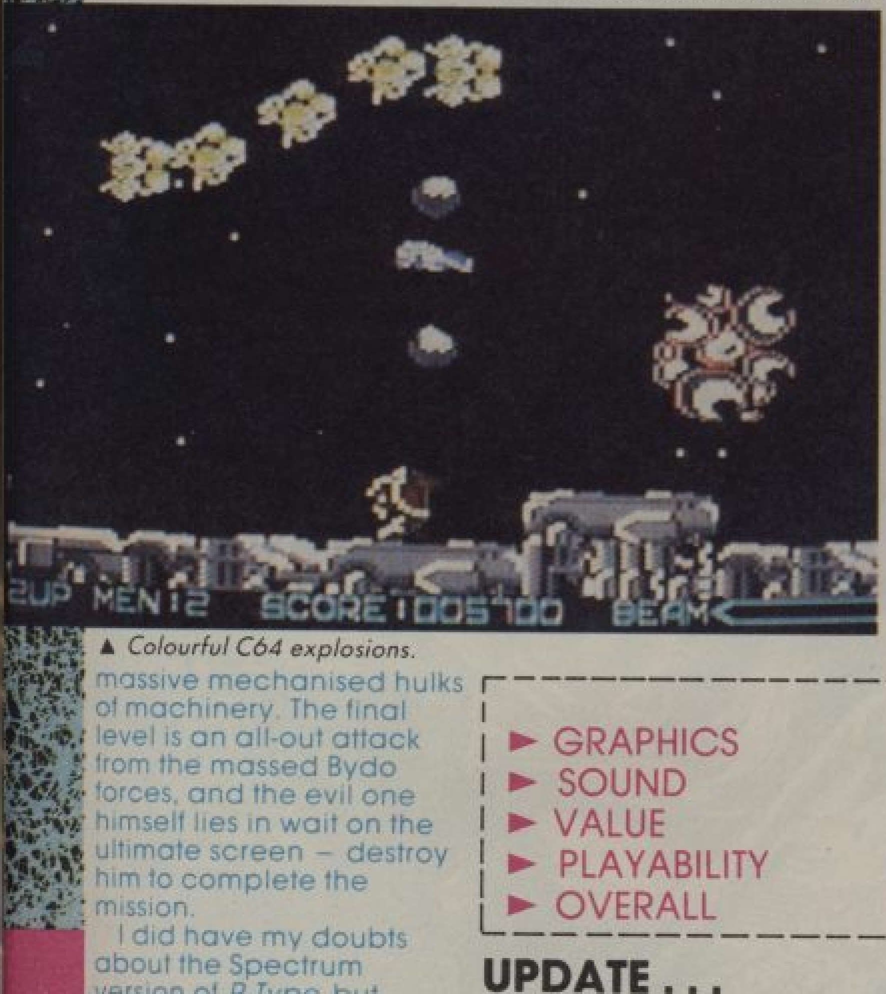
Subsequent levels take the ship through two alien factories, tortuous mazes densely populated by Bydo combat craft, gun emplacements and massive mechanised hulks of machinery. The final level is an all-out attack from the massed Bydo forces, and the evil one himself lies in wait on the ultimate screen – destroy him to complete the mission.

I did have my doubts about the Spectrum version of *R-Type*, but Electric Dreams has coped admirably, and the end result is fantastic! The graphics are obviously a pale imitation of the original, but nevertheless they still capture the spirit nicely, and what is lost visually is made up by the gameplay. To coin a well-used cliche, all the features of the arcade machine have been included, and the end result is an excellent shoot 'em up that's both challenging and addictive. An absolute must for Spectrum blasting fanatics!

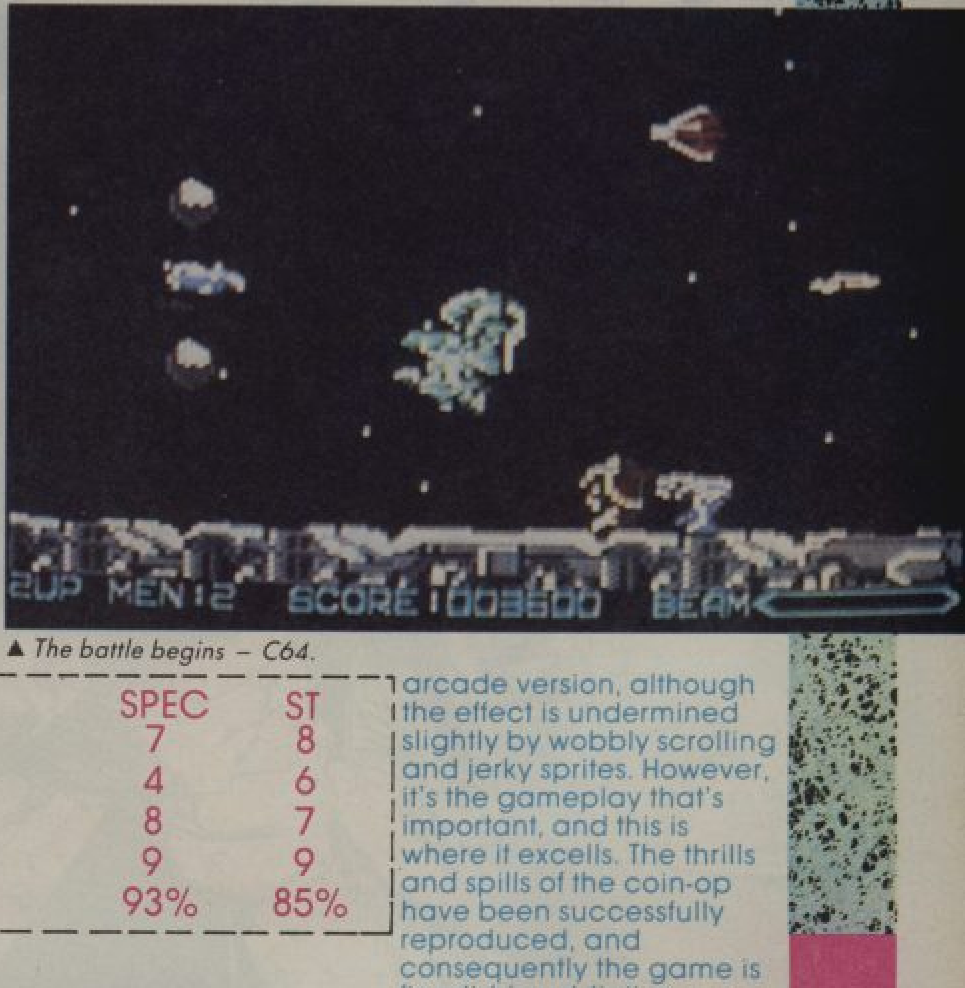
The ST version looks almost identical to the arcade version, although the effect is undermined slightly by wobbly scrolling and jerky sprites. However, it's the gameplay that's important, and this is where it excells. The thrills and spills of the coin-op have been successfully reproduced, and consequently the game is fiendishly addictive – there are huge rips in the office carpet where I was dragged away to write this review. It goes without saying that if you enjoy a good shoot 'em up, you should shoot down the shop immediately and purchase a copy, or you can use our mega money-off voucher and buy it for £11 – surely the bargain of the year?



▲ *Seconds from death on the ST.*



▲ *Colourful C64 explosions.*



▲ *The battle begins – C64.*

	SPEC	ST
► GRAPHICS	7	8
► SOUND	4	6
► VALUE	8	7
► PLAYABILITY	9	9
► OVERALL	93%	85%

UPDATE . . .

As usual, the Amiga version should be the most impressive of the lot – although it doesn't look as though it'll be around until Christmas.

The C64 incarnation looks alright, but lacks the polish of other games such as *Armalyte*. Still, it's a reasonable enough rendition of the arcade game to warrant looking out for.

Work is well underway for the Amstrad version, which should be more colourful than the Spectrum version, and play just as well.

R-TYPE

COMPETITION

R-TYPE COUPON NO 1

Because C + VG is the biggest and best computer games mag around, we always have the biggest and best prizes. In two weeks time, two lucky readers are jetting off to Disneyland for a week. We'll bring you a full report on that in due course. But if you didn't win that one, don't despair, as there are stacks more mega prizes in the pipeline- including the chance to win your very own R-Type coin-op.





Be the envy of all your mates when this master blaster moves into your bedroom. Imagine it – the PC Engine version may be cool but nothing beats the coin-op itself.

Full details of how to enter will be in next month's C + VG, but you must cut out and keep this coupon – as you will need both coupon No. 1 and coupon No. 2 to enter the compo. Be lucky.

16 Bit Super Saver

R-Type is definitely the hottest shoot 'em up game of the last couple of years. It has stood the test of time – passing through the phase of being the 'hit coin-op' of the moment to real, lasting cult status.

Many a coin-op fan – including a few who work on this magazine – will tell you that they are happy to put a few bob in the latest machines but they don't leave the arcade without having one last go on R-Type, or two, or three.

Electric Dreams has made a more than competent job of the conversions. Whether it be the ST, Commodore 64, or Spectrum or R-Type, officianado's won'be disappointed with the home version.

Don't take our word for it, load up the free demo that we've supplied with this month's issue and see for yourself.

As we could not run to the cost of an Amiga and ST demo (Julian Rignall spent all our dosh on Brighton Pier) we can offer a unique, exclusive cash saving offer instead. C + VG and Electric Dreams have put their heads together to offer an **amazing £10 off the ST and Amiga versions of R-Type.**

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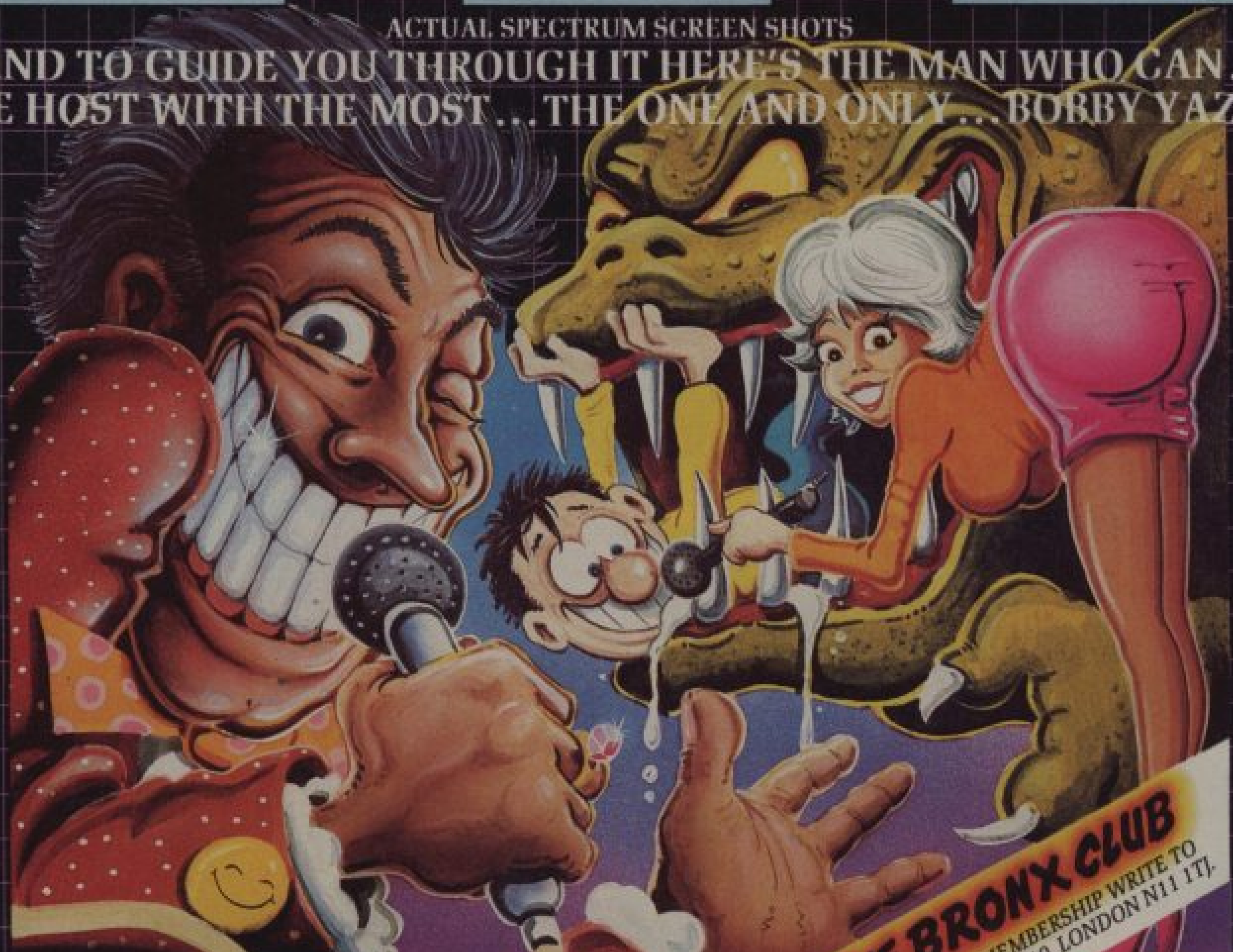
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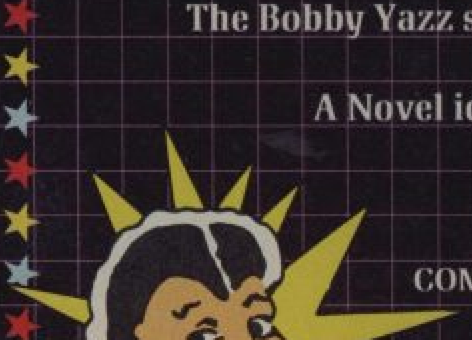
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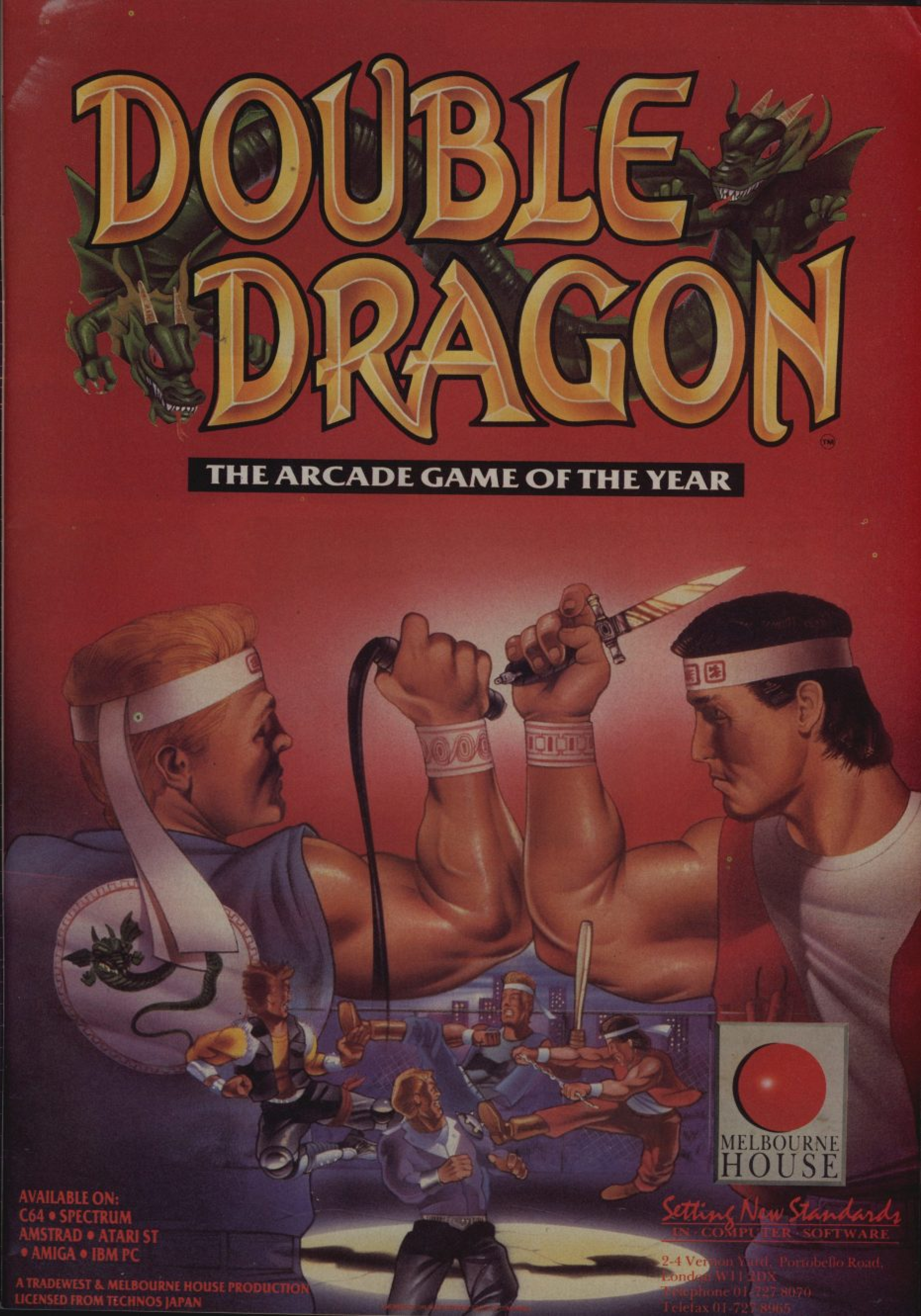
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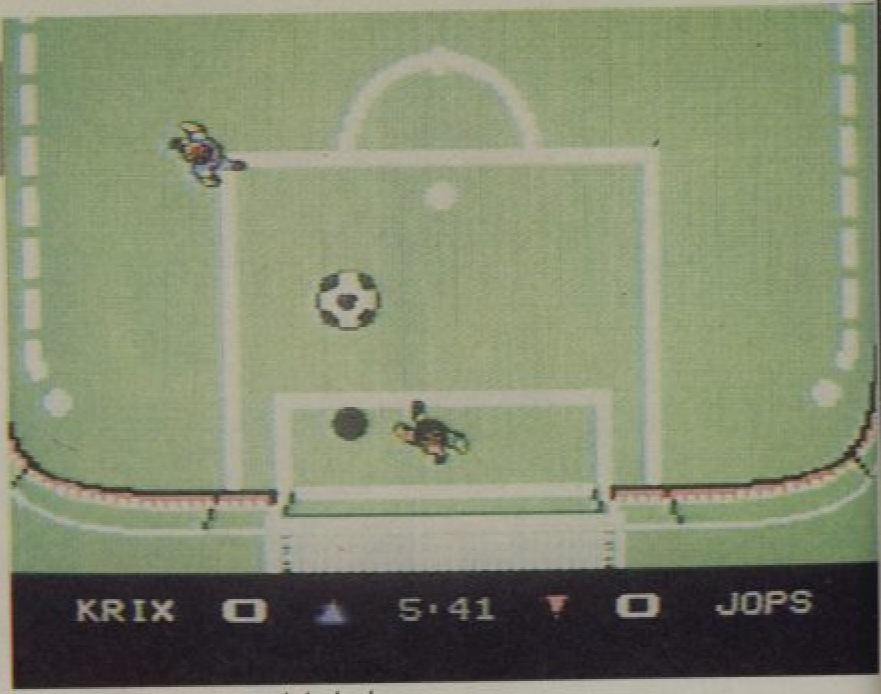
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MICROPROSE SOCCER



▲ A feeble attempt to lob the keeper.

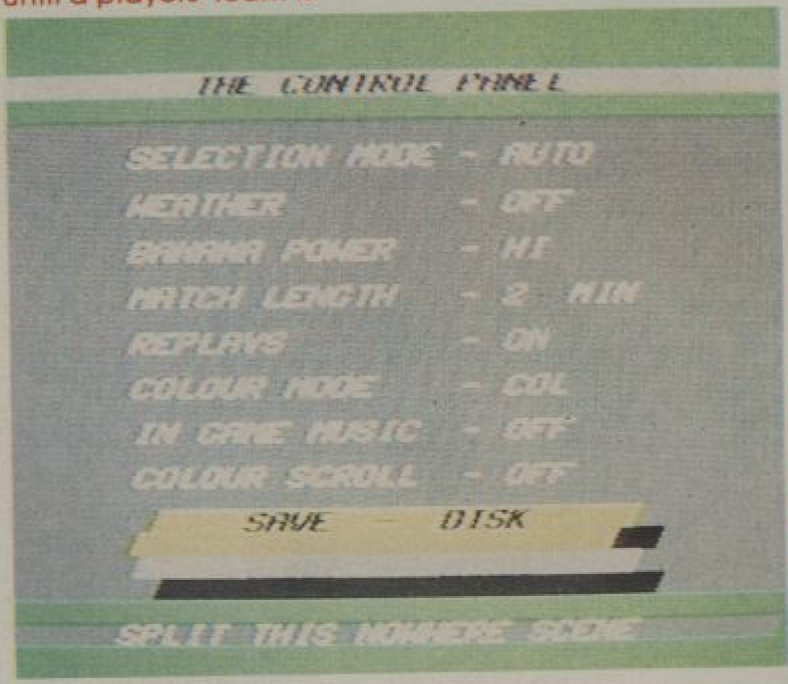
► SUPPLIER: MICROPROSE.
► MACHINE: CBM 64/128.
► PRICE: £14.95 CASS. £19.95 DISK.
► REVIEWER: GARY WHITTA.

Up until now quality football simulations on the 64 have been few and far between. Apart from Ocean's *Match Day II* and the five-year old *International Soccer* there's been precious little for 64 owning footy fans to shout about. All that, however, is about to change. Programmed by Jon Hare, Chris Yates and Martin Galway, collectively known as Sensible Software, creators of *Parallax, Wizball, The Shoot 'em up Construction Kit* and the initially titled *Sensisoccer, Microprose Soccer* looks set to become THE definitive sport simulation on any computer.

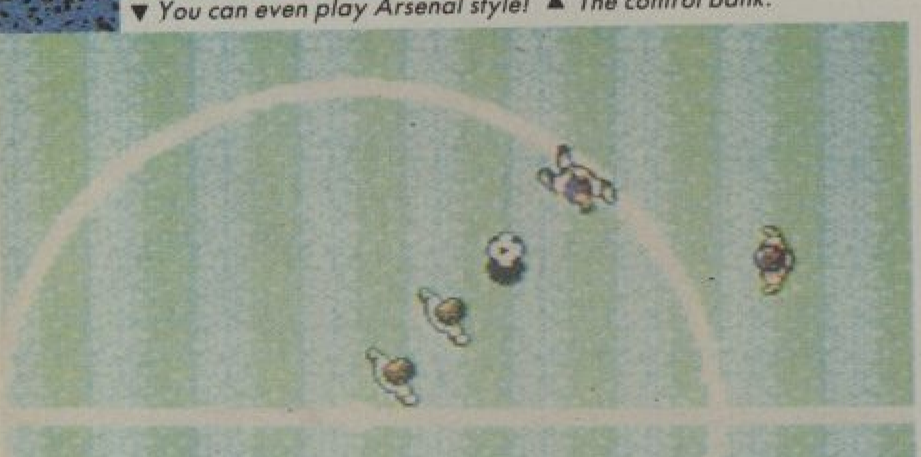
Unlike most other games in the genre, *Microprose Soccer* allows you to play football at every imaginable level, from friendly six-a-side matches played on an indoor pitch right up to the tournament that forms the main part of the game: the World Cup itself!

Conversions of Microprose Soccer are currently underway to all popular formats, and the PC version is looking particularly tasty. Seeing as the original is such a great game, we should expect to see some damn good 16-bit versions. Here's hoping . . .

Up to sixteen human players can enter into the World Cup, and each must choose which country they wish to represent from a list of 29 before play can begin in earnest. Once teams have been selected, the remaining ones are put under computer control and the first round begins. Matches between two computer controlled teams don't actually take place on screen. Instead the final score is calculated at random and displayed automatically by a click of the fire button. This goes on until a players' team is 'called up' for a match. When it is, it's time to take joystick in hand and kick off against whoever you've been drawn against, be it a computer team or one represented by another player (if it is, both take the field in a two-player match).



▲ The control bank.



▼ You can even play Arsenal style!

When the match begins it becomes apparent exactly why *Microprose Soccer* is different. Instead of the usual (and tired-out) method of displaying the game side-on, with the pitch scrolling horizontally, *Microprose Soccer* gives you a direct bird's-eye view of the match, while the pitch scrolls in all four directions, so only a small section is shown at any one time. This, plus the bird's-eye viewpoint gives an impression remarkably similar to Taito's *World Cup* coin-op.

The control method couldn't be simpler or more effective. Out of the eleven players in your team, you can only directly control one at a time: the one nearest the ball. Dribbling the ball becomes automatic as soon as it is in possession, while the fire button will kick the ball in the direction you're facing. The length of time that the button is depressed determines the power of the kick. There are several different types of kick, each one accessed by certain joystick actions executed immediately before kicking the ball. For instance, centring the joystick before the kick results in a high lob, while a diagonal movement executes a spectacular banana kick. There's even a bicycle kick that sends the ball flying back over your head and bewildering any defenders!



▲ *The goalie is stranded.*

PROSE
CER

If the opposing team gets possession of the ball, it can only be recaptured with a sliding tackle. Pressing fire will send your player skidding across the pitch in an attempt to win the ball. If you time it right, you can knock the ball away from your opponent and recapture it. If you miss, you simply slide right past, wasting valuable time. Should the opposing team get within close range of your goal area, a buzzer sounds and control is handed over to your goalie. As usual he can move anywhere within his area, and pressing the fire will cause him to dive for the ball.

Corners, throw-ins and goal kicks all feature in the game, as does the weather! From time to time (usually when you least expect it) there'll be a clap of thunder, a flash of lightning and it'll start to bucket down, accompanied by some excellent sound effects. But it's not just an effect. The rain makes the pitch slippery, and so mis-timing a sliding tackle in the rain could well send you spinning out of control right across the pitch!

A special mention has to be made of the excellent replay feature. When a goal is scored, the last few seconds of play leading up to the goal are replayed in slow motion, and even crackly tape rewind effects and interference have been incorporated to make the whole thing look realistic. It's an excellent idea and one that's extremely entertaining in practice.

As mentioned earlier, there are several other kinds of game to play. Practice and friendly matches can take place on a smaller indoor pitch that scrolls in just two directions, and there's also an international soccer challenge that pits you against 16 foreign teams methodically, from the walkovers such as New Zealand and Oman to the real powerhouses, Italy and Brazil. Beat both of them and you've really got something to boast about!

I was overwhelmed by *Microprose Soccer*. It's undoubtedly the best football game ever produced and even puts the superlative Epyx series of sims to shame for sheer playability! It's also one of the most user-friendly programs I've encountered. The duration of the matches can be changed, as can the strength of the banana kicks and the colour of the players' strips. The attention to detail is flawless. The players jump for joy when a goal is scored and the aforementioned action replays are just brilliant. Martin Galway has provided some excellent tunes and effects to accompany the action and the graphics rate as some of the best defined the 64 has ever seen. All in all, *Microprose Soccer* is without doubt one of the greatest 64 games to date, and I don't expect we'll see anything as good as quite some time to come. Miss it at your peril!



▲ *More six-a-side laffs 'n' japes.*

► GRAPHICS	9
► SOUND	9
► VALUE	8
► PLAYABILITY	9
► OVERALL	95%

UPDATE . . .

Footy fans will be thrilled to hear that Microprose Soccer is currently being converted to all popular formats – both 8 and 16 bit. Obviously work on some of the versions has only just started but the PC version we saw at the PC Show is looking particularly spiffy and colourful. You may have to wait a bit for Microprose Soccer to finally arrive for your computer, but judging by the excellent 64 version, it'll be well worth it.

C+VG GAME OF THE MONTH

▼ *Says it all really.*



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Screen shots from various formats.

Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Alpha House

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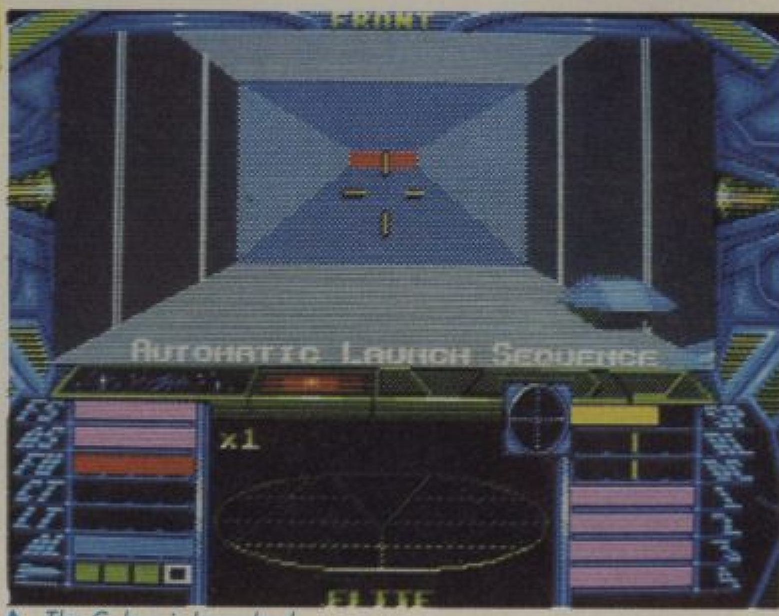


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Reviews

► MACHINES: ATARI ST, AMIGA, IBM PC, C64, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD, MSX, BBC.
► PRICES: SPEC/AMS £9.95 CASS, AMS £12.95 DISK, C64/MSX/BBC £14.95 CASS, C64/MSX/BBC £17.95 DISK, ST/AMIGA/PC £24.95
► SUPPLIER: FIREBIRD.
► VERSION TESTED: ST.
► REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.



▲ The Cobra is launched.

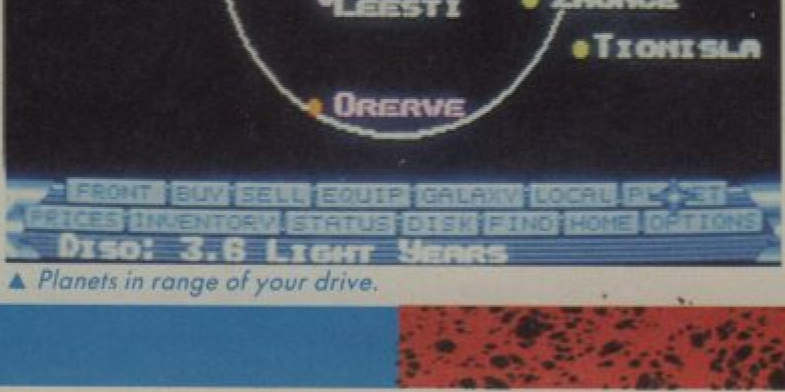
ELITE

Elite, the game that became an overnight sensation when it was released on the BBC back in 1984, and is now widely regarded as one of the all-time classic computer games, has finally made it to the 16-bit machines.

It's a space trading game, if you don't know, and casts the player as a pilot of the future, who travels the universe in search of fame and fortune. The game is presented in filled-3D, rather than the vector graphics of earlier versions, and incorporates several new features and extra missions.

The player starts a game with 100 credits and a Cobra Mk III trading and combat craft, complete with single forward-firing laser, three bombing missiles and seven light years of fuel. Rated "harmless", the objective is to increase your status – by fair means or foul – and become "elite". There are two basic ways of doing this: honest trading, or by becoming a mercenary and running contraband goods and attacking innocent craft. Although the latter tactic guarantees faster progression, it also runs the risk of attracting police attention and possible intervention. And in this particular far-flung future, the results of that can be fatal . . .

The mission begins with the Cobra at Lave Authorities space station, and from here any of 2,000 planets may be visited. But first, it's a wise idea to stock up with goods. There's a wide variety to choose from, but due to restricted credits and cargo hold, what you'd like to carry, and what you *can* actually carry may be two different things entirely. Possible cargoes include machinery, foods, textiles, liquor/wines, furs and raw materials. Other saleable goods include firearms, slaves, narcotics, alien items, computers and radioactives – but these are beyond the budget of a first-time player. Once you've stocked up it's time to choose a destination.



▲ Planets in range of your drive.

Selecting "local" from the menu brings up a map of all planets within reach of the Cobra, allowing the player to plan a route. Details of each planet can be accessed, showing the type of government, tech level, type of industry and race, so the player can choose which location would be best to sell his goods. Careful planning is required here – there's no point trying to trade foods in a rich agricultural system – that would be like selling sand in the Sahara! Try machinery instead.

When the destination has been chosen, the Cobra is launched into space, and



▲ While the Cobra docks . . .



▲ As the Sun would say: GOTCHA!

you're on your own. On-screen information during space flight includes the Cobra's shield level (depleted through repeated hits), speed, fuel level, cabin and laser temperature, altitude, missiles remaining, compass and radar, which shows everything in the immediate vicinity.

Pressing the H key initialises the hyperdrive, and the Cobra is transported to the destination planet. The ship actually emerges from hyperspace some distance from the planet, and the jump drive can be activated to send the Cobra zooming towards its destination at high speed. The drive automatically disengages when it's near to the planet, or if there's a ship nearby. When the Cobra flies within range of a space station, an S is displayed on the radar screen and the compass can be used to direct the ship straight towards it.

Docking with a space station involves lining the Cobra up with the entry port, so that it can be flown in without scraping the sides. Since the space station rotates, this is far from easy and my first few attempts ended in me going for an impromptu and fatal space walk through the wreckage of my own craft! However, practice makes perfect – and since this is such an integral part of the game, you really do have to practice!!

If you manage to dock successfully, you can trade your goods, buy some more or equip your ship. Extra equipment is varied and pricey, but one of the most important items is an automatic docking computer, which eliminates the risk of crashing into a space station – it does the job automatically. An escape capsule is similarly useful, as it allows you to eject the Cobra is about to be destroyed. Although your cargo is lost, you'll be tracked down and brought into the nearest space station with your bank balance intact.

An ECM is useful against enemy missiles, and a larger cargo hold, more powerful armament, fuel scoops (which let you grab extra fuel by flying close to a sun) and energy bombs may also be purchased.

When the ship is docked, the current position can be saved, or an old position loaded – saving at regular intervals is a very good habit to get into.

Once you've finished, it's time to search for another potentially lucrative trading area, and blast off into space once again.

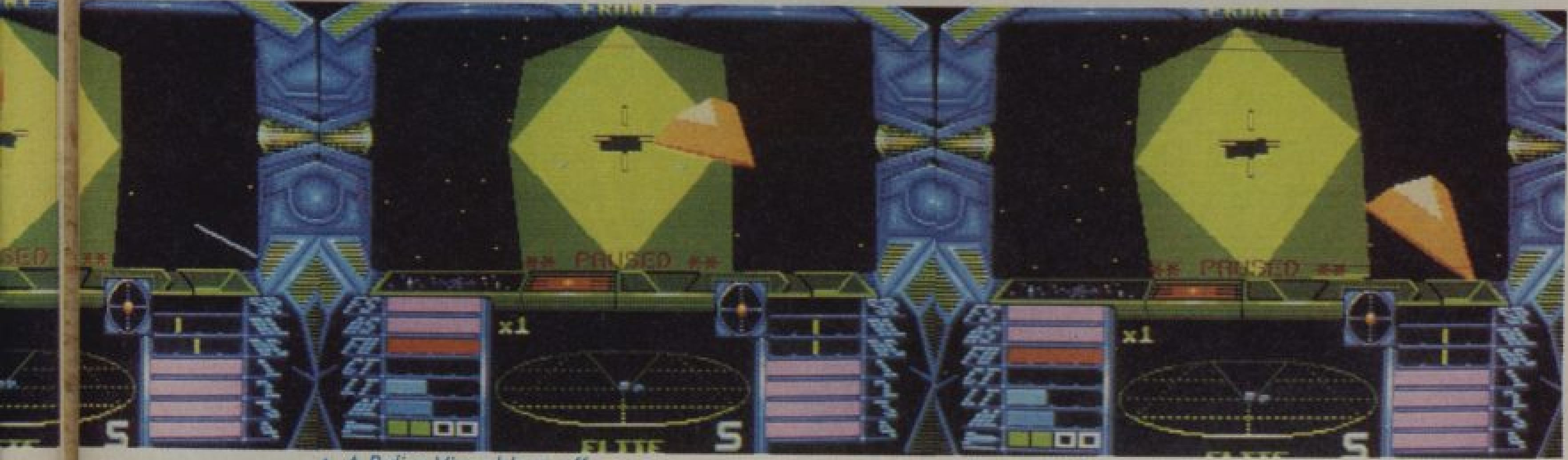
During your travels it's inevitable that you'll encounter other traders and ships. Some are passive, and others aggressive – if a ship is the latter, "red alert" appears on-screen, and a klaxon sounds to warn of an impending dogfight. Here the choice is simple: attempt to run, or stay and fight. If you're a beginner with standard armoury, it might be wiser to show a yellow streak and beat a hasty retreat. If you're of tougher mettle and want to fight, prepare to battle for your life!

As your status increases, so does the frequency of

continued on page 39 ▸



▲ Six minutes 19 seconds into the game.


▲ A Police Viper blasts off . . .

▲ In pursuit of a pirate.





◂ A veritable intergalactic Woolworths.

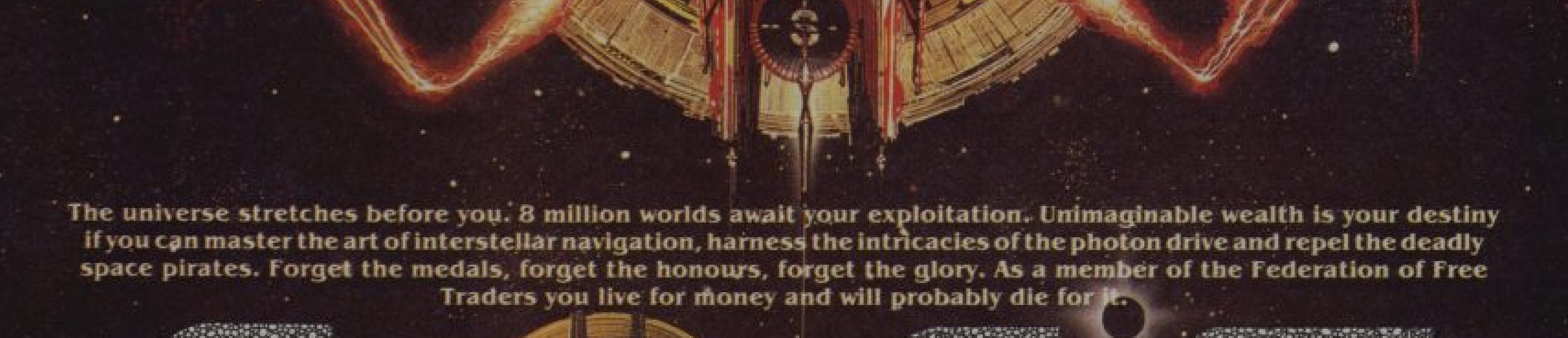
Your quest is interstellar wealth and to hell with glory



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FOFT

FEDERATION OF FREE TRADERS



Screen shots from Atari ST version.

ATARI ST/AMIGA
£29.99

ILLUSTRATION: PETER ANDREW JONES.
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▲ *The jump drive is disengaged as a pirate attacks.*

ELITE

attackers, and if your exploits tend towards the criminal, the intergalactic police may also attack on sight.

Later in the game, you're asked to complete specific missions for a large reward. There are five of these, ranging from a seek-and-destroy sorte to tracking down a specific alien item.

The ST version of *Elite* is excellent, and boasts superb presentation, fast and smooth gameplay, great graphics and five new missions. Purists will be pleased to know that none of the basic 8-bit gameplay has been changed, and the action is even more enthralling than the original versions.

Trading and fighting is a highly enjoyable experience, although the going does get occasionally tedious when you can't use the jump drive due to the presence of other craft. This results in the player having to locate the space station manually, which can take over a quarter of an hour! Another gripe is that the sound is rather feeble – I'm sure the effects could have been a little more meaty.

That aside, *Elite* has enough depth to keep budding space traders engrossed for many months.

► GRAPHICS	8
► SOUND	6
► VALUE	6
► PLAYABILITY	8
► OVERALL	82%

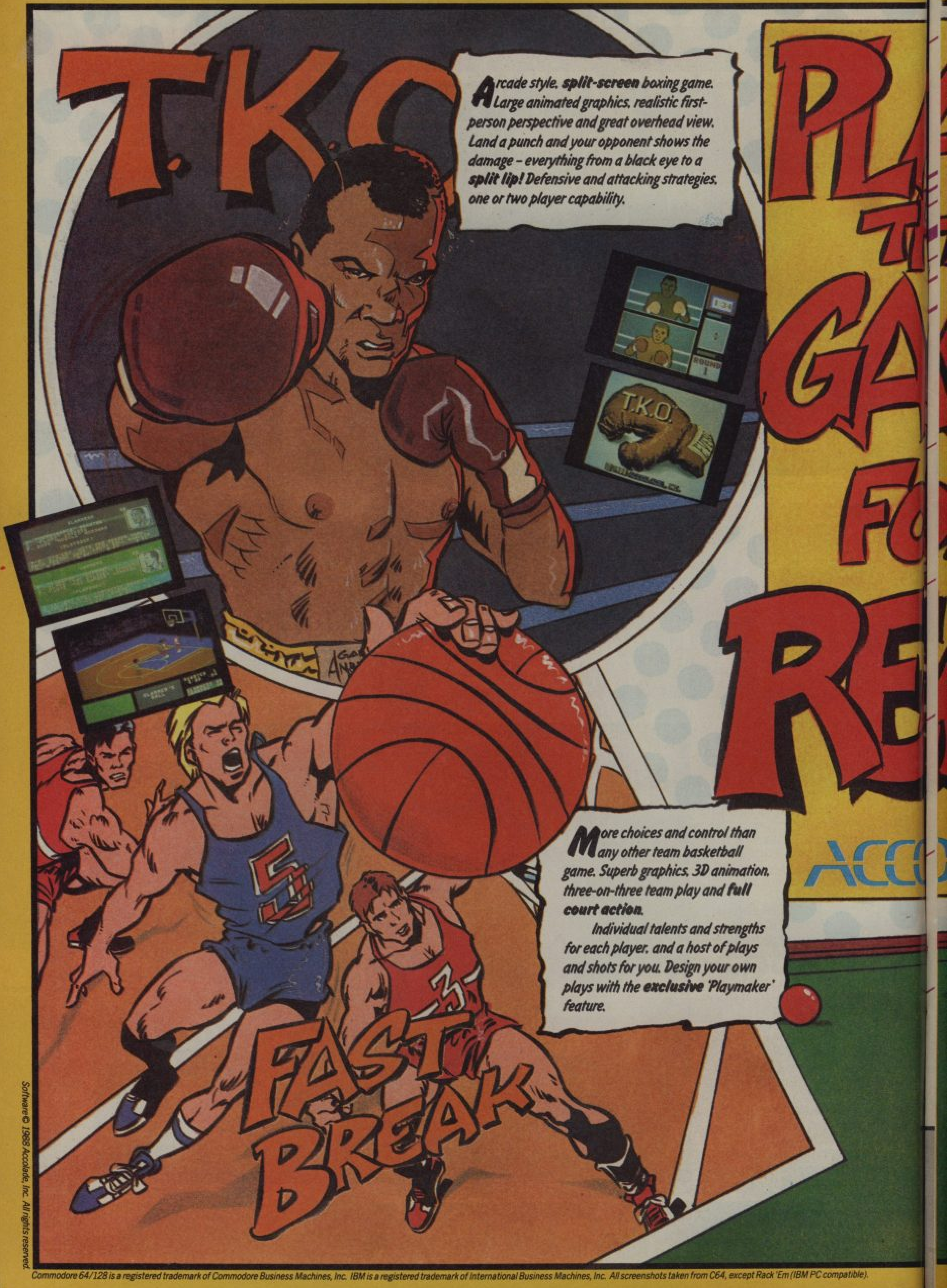
UPDATE . . .

The Amiga version should be ready by the time you read this, and will feature similar gameplay and graphics and improved sound.

The 8-bit formats have been out for some time now, and are all very good.

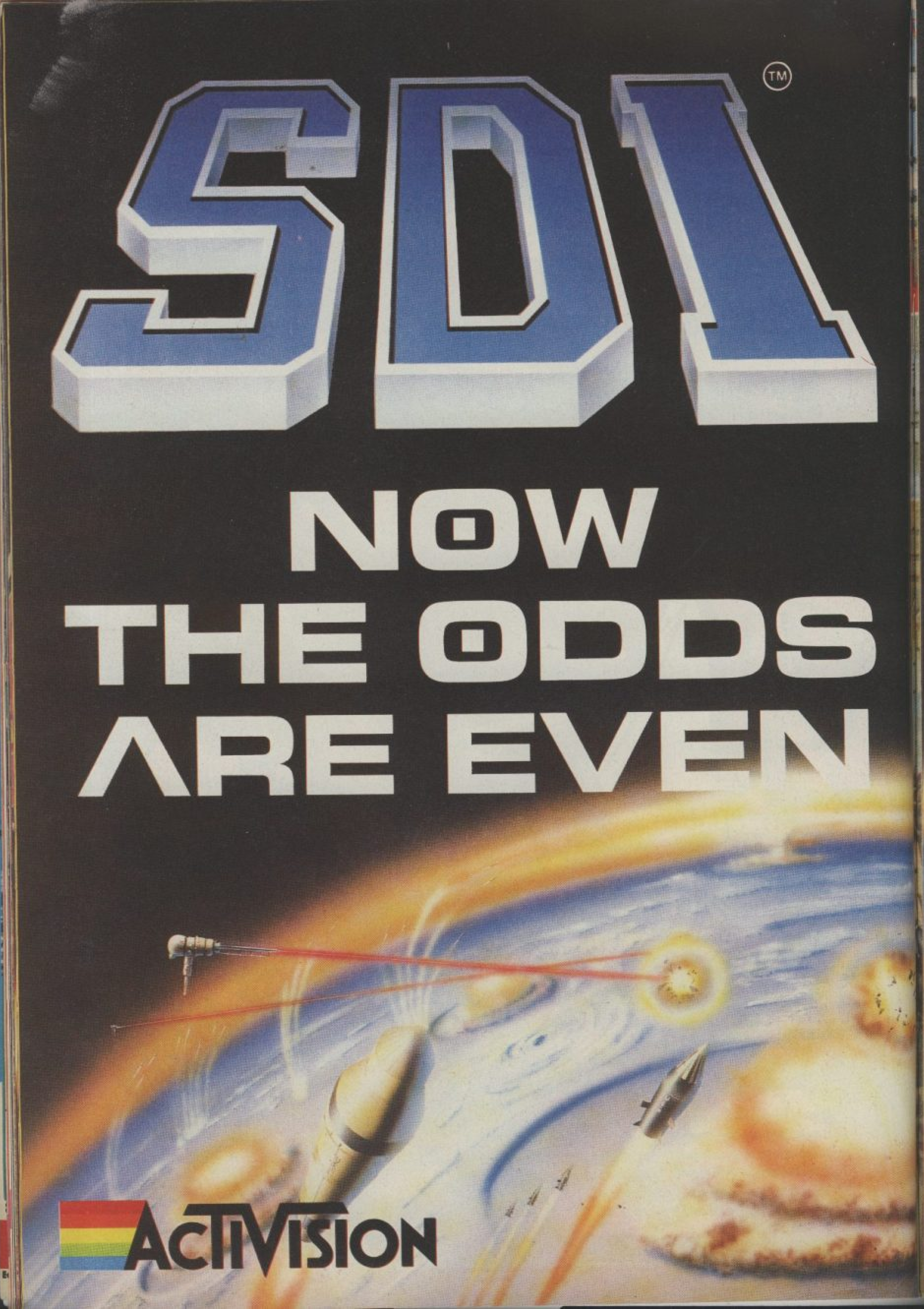


▲ *A missile is destroyed just before it hits.*


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Atari ST screen shots shown

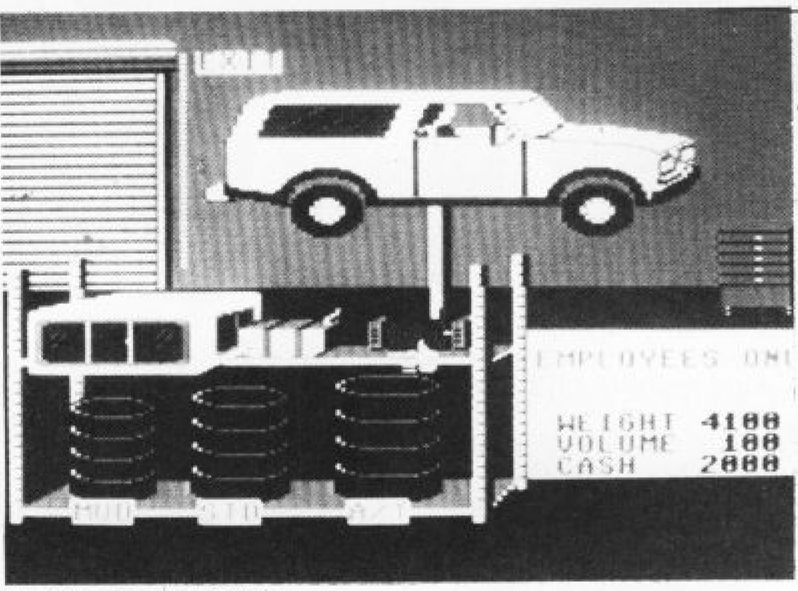
Available on:- C64 cassette: £9.99, C64 disk: £14.99
Spectrum: £9.99, Atari ST: £19.99
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SEGA®

4X4 RACING

► MACHINES: C64, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD, IBM PC AND COMPATIBLES, AMIGA.
► PRICE: C64 AND AMSTRAD £9.99/14.99, SPEC £8.99, AMIGA/PC £19.95.
► SUPPLIER: EPYX.
► VERSION TESTED: C64 DISK.
► REVIEWER: MATT BIELBY.



▲ *Choosing your truck.*

Quite how many folk are into off road racing in this neck of the woods is a bit of a mystery to me, so it is possible that *4x4 Off-Road Racing* will disappear down that same dumper of dis-interest as the Shirley Muldthingie drag racing game of a few months ago.

I've always been of the mind that anything that conspicuously fails to show any screenshots on the packaging has to have a thing or two to hide anyway.

In the event, however, it's not too much of a horror story, just a bit uninspired. Taking its cue from those skateboarding games, it allows you first to customise your truck with tyres, winches, extra fuel and other add on bits before setting out on the "toughest, roughest courses" in the world. This picking and choosing specifications is all very well, and makes for a nice extra to a game, but to be bothered doing it, the thing really has to be special in the first place.

Right, terrain picked, and difficulty level selected (you get to chose from four) and it's time to chose your truck. Each comes with horsepower, weight, and durability specifications, but it must be said, looks remarkably like the rest (especially from the rear) and performs not too dissimilarly.

All is well and good so far, unless you get annoyed at the painfully slow selection process which involves some dull punter sauntering up and down outside the shop front. Then – you've guessed it – it's already time to turn the disk over and load the race itself. Quite how cassette owners could ever stand it I don't know.

As you can see from the screenshots, the race itself is not at all dissimilar to an inferior *Buggy Boy*. There are sticks, piles of mud and dropped spare tyres to avoid or jump over, and though it costs time, going up on two wheels is both easy and fun. Big rocks wipe you out whether you drive a little Katana or a hardy Highlander, and various items bounce out of the wreckage including the driver and a little dog.

The main difference from other driving games is that every so often big patches of mud appear, totally obscuring your path. The idea is to drive your 4x4 through, and while obviously it's much easier if you've thought to buy a winch to assist you, it is possible to rock your way out with the fire button in only a few seconds. This can damage your rig though, as can various collisions you might make happen to make, which takes you to a damage screen. Here you can repair the fault – an easy task when you've brought the right bits, but you lose endurance if you jury-rig it.

There are check points to help you pace yourself against your opponents who you come across occasionally, and a "Doombuggy" to avoid, which is some homocidal maniac who tries to force you off the road. To be avoided!

▼ *Good plus for Kawasaki!*



All in all, *4x4* seems like a fine idea for a game undermined by poor and rushed looking programming. The strategy elements help add something to what would otherwise be a pretty basic sort of race, but the quality of the sprites and backgrounds, and the very basic scrolling, make it very difficult to recommend. The trucks slide all over the place, and often appear to be walking as each wheel jolts up and down in turn in imitation of suspension!

It's a pity, because I'm a big fan of 4x4s, and would much rather play a good game based around them than, for example, the awful *Roadblasters*.

► GRAPHICS	4
► SOUND	3
► PLAYABILITY	5
► VALUE	4
► OVERALL	47%

UPDATE . . .

US Gold has expressed a degree of unhappiness with the first released C64 version of the game, and say Spectrum, Amstrad and others released towards November will be vast improvements. There is no reason why this couldn't make for a perfectly decent game, so we can only hope that this isn't all hot air.

Certainly, if the multiload is brought down to acceptable levels there would be a sizable improvement. I certainly wouldn't want to be a Spectrum owner as it stands!

Reviews

POWER

► **SUPPLIER: ELECTRONIC ARTS.**
► **MACHINES: ATARI ST/AMIGA/PC.**
► **PRICE: £24.95.**
► **VERSION TESTED: ATARI ST.**
► **REVIEWER: EUGENE LACEY.**

I don't know what it is about the Atari ST and the Amiga but most of the programmers coding away on their 16 bit dream machines seem determined to produce games with solid filled 3D graphics.

First there was *Starglider II*, then *Elite* for the ST, *Damocles* looks as if it will go down this route, Image Works is polishing up *Interphase* for launch next year and now Electronic Arts enters the arena with a solid filled gizmo called *Power Drome*.

There is nothing particularly wrong with this. Most of the games mentioned above are, or look as if they will be, brilliant. It's just that solid filled 3D graphics was just one of the things we were promised by the coders when the ST and the Amiga first arrived on the scene and they were were all drooling over their capabilities. We were also promised digitised speech, sampled sounds, multi tasking, and a host of other things.

I am not being funny or anything – but we honestly don't need too much more solid filled 3D "gosh what a fast routine", "state of the art" "really shows what a 16 bit machine can do" type of thinking. Time for a bit of originality m'thinks.

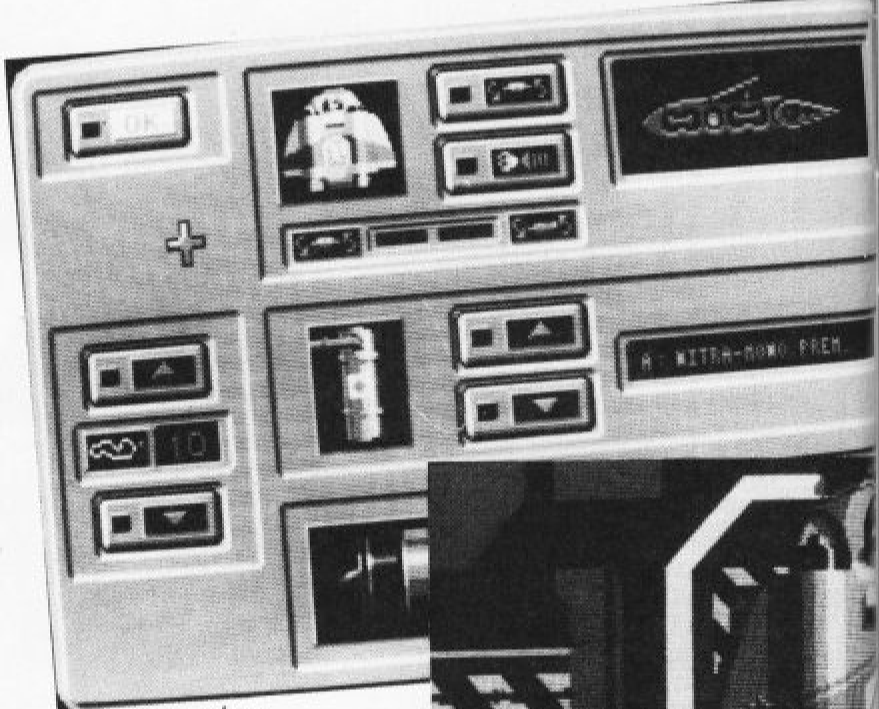
Now that I've got that off my chest, I'll tell you about *Power Drome* – and it really is quite good.

You enter a future world grand prix. Not racing cars but sleek looking hover jets. The first thing that strikes you is the quality of the graphics. Programmer Nick Powell has done a superb job of the racing tracks, Typhoon jets, and pit stops.

Using a mouse or joystick you have to negotiate the twisting corridors, tunnels, bridges of *Power Drome* as you seek to secure the Cyberneufe Trophy.

The championship is spread over six races on six different planets – all with different atmospheric conditions. Your fuel and ship equipment has to modified accordingly.

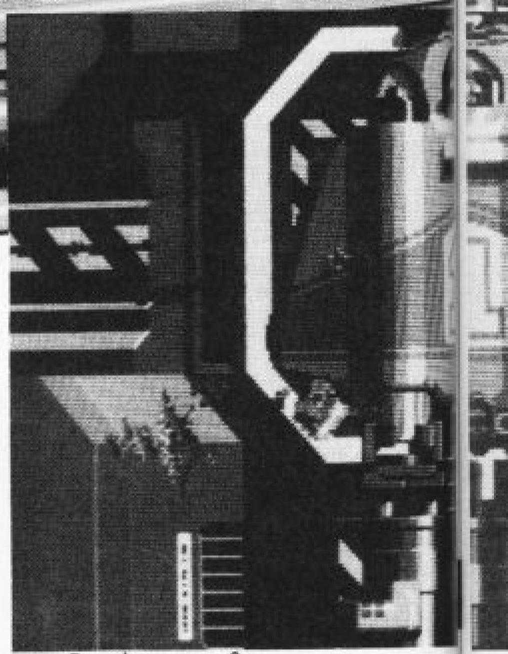
Scenario and ship customising screens apart this game is really about flight control and racing.



▲ *Engine tuning.*

It really is quite difficult to fly the ship. It will take you a good deal of practice – flying in practice mode with the altitude control on auto pilot. This will enable you to learn how to bank and take corners. Only when you have masterd this can you start to squeeze the accelerator and start to dip and climb.

The difficulty of control is not a flaw. It is tough because you have a great deal of control over the ship and the response on mouse or joystick is highly sensitive.

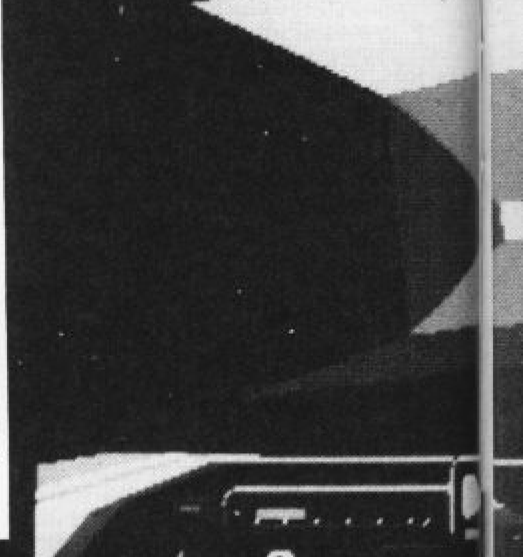

▲ *Ready to race?*

I preferred to use the joystick but this does make life even more difficult when you need an extra hand to cut the engines

▼ *Seconds before the start.*



▼ *Approaching an opening and closing doo*

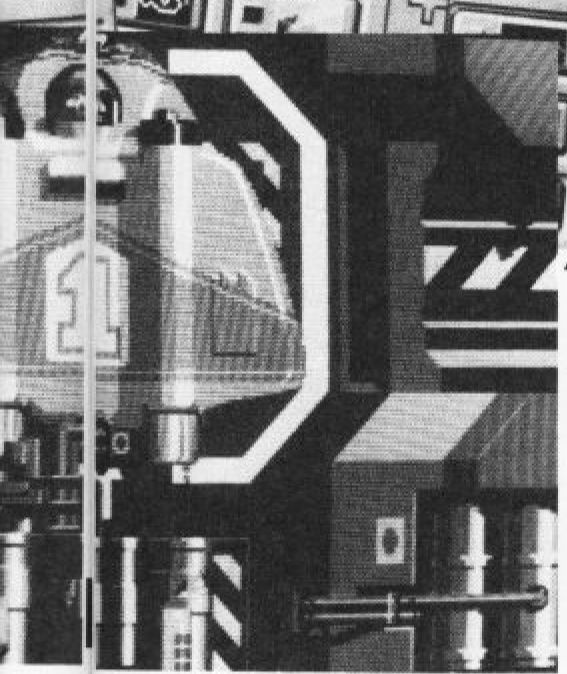


DROME





▲ *An Opponent.*



and implement other manoeuvres which require you to tap certain keys on the computer.

Another slight gripe is that the game can appear less like a race and more like a solo flight against the clock. This impression is created by the fact that there are only four other racers out there – and some of the tracks are massive. You can quite often lose the other pilots right at the beginning of the race if you are a bit tasty – or more often than not they will lose you and glimpse them every so often as they lap you.

A race ends when a pilot completes the set number of laps. The race may end for you sooner than this though if your ship becomes too badly damaged and you cannot make it back for repair.

The ship sustains damage mainly by crashing into the walls of the tracks or by colliding with other Typhoon's.

Power Dróme is full of neat graphical frills. You discover more and more of them as you play. Most impressive of these is the bit in the pits as the damaged wings and engines are pulled away from the Typhoon and replaced by new ones. It's all carried out by pressing buttons on the keyboard to make the repair droid do his work.

There is also some stunning forked lightning on one of the planets and a graphical touch was the shadow of other Typhoon's passing across the ground after my craft had nose dived.

Sound effects are well implemented. Nice wind sounds, thunderclaps, and whooshing of Typhoon's as they approach and disappear into the distance.

This is one of EA's first home produced games. It has taken a long time to produce – and the other versions will take still longer – but is a quality piece of software.

It lacks the depth of game play of something like *Carrier Command* or *Captain Blood* but then it is easier to get in to (apart from the flight control) and has a good story line and extremely thorough manual.

The bottom line for *Power Drome* is that it is a good 3D style racing game for the ST and Amiga and as there aren't many games around that fit this description I can recommend it thoroughly. You won't be disappointed if you fork out for it.

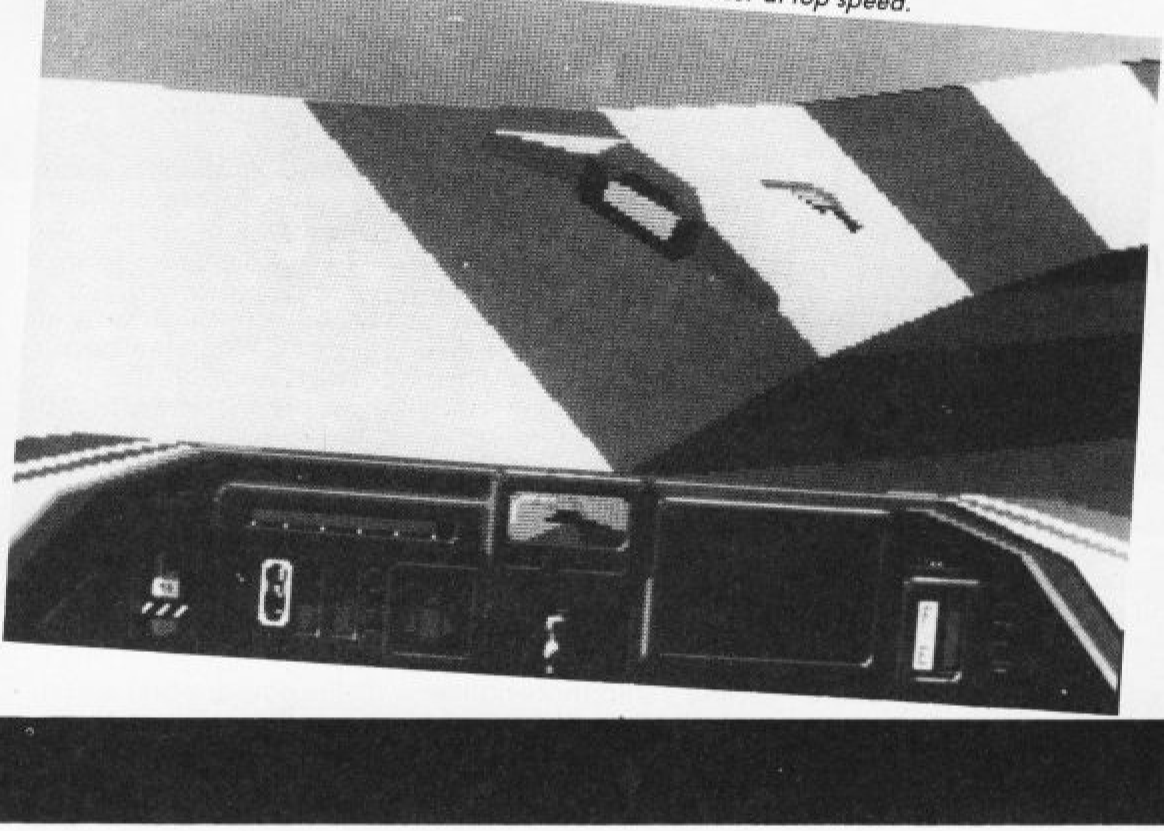
► GRAPHICS	9
► SOUND	8
► VALUE	7
► PLAYABILITY	8
► OVERALL	80%

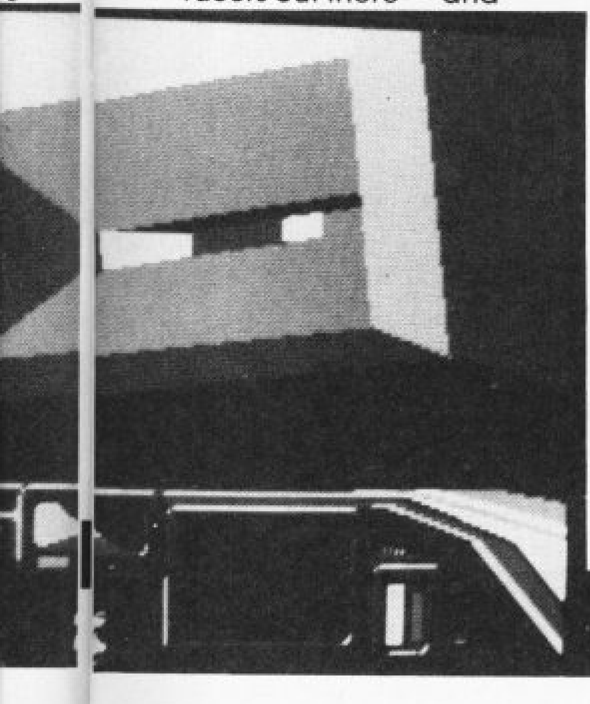
UPDATE . . .

In true Electronic Arts fashion the launches of the various versions will be staggered over the next few months. The ST version, reviewed here, will be in the shops by the end of the month. Amiga and PC versions will follow early next year. One neat feature of the 16 bit version is that they have the facility to link up to another computer (you have to buy a cheap cable though) so that you can have a real head to head with a friend. Nice one EA.

g door

▼ *Overtaking another racer at top speed.*





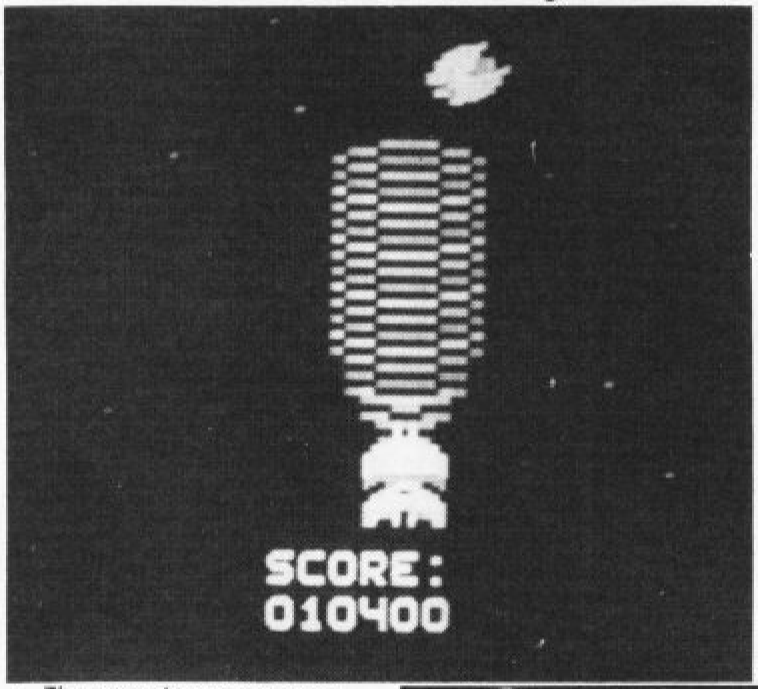
Reviews

GAPLUS

- ► MACHINE: C64.
- ► PRICE: £8.99.
- ► SUPPLIER: VIRGIN.
- ► VERSION TESTED: C64.
- ► REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.

Back in 1979 Namco released *Galaxians,* a full-colour video game which added a new twist to the jaded *Space Invaders* theme. Instead of moving across the screen in a strict formation, individual ships peeled off from the main group at the top of the screen and dive-bombed the player's laser base, kamikaze-style. At the time the game caused a minor sensation.

A year later *Super Galaxians* was released; the same game, but faster and meaner.



▲ *The space hoover in action.*

Then, in late 1981, Namco looked to their original game for inspiration, and *Galaga* was born. Its game mechanics are fundamentally similar, but new twists were added in the form of double firepower capability, bonus screens and more vicious, swirling patterns of attack craft.

Another year and a half passed by before Namco revitalised the theme and produced *Gaplus.* This time the new additions were different style bonus screens, the ability to turn attackers into allies and the player's ship was given a bigger area of movement.

Since then, the *Galaxians* theme has been exhumed once, in the form of *Galaga* '88.

The Gaplus licence was recently bought by Virgin, and the conversion task given to Compunet aces Ash and Dave – and what a great job they've done: from the graphics through sound to gameplay, the Commodore version of *Gaplus* is faithful to the original in every way.

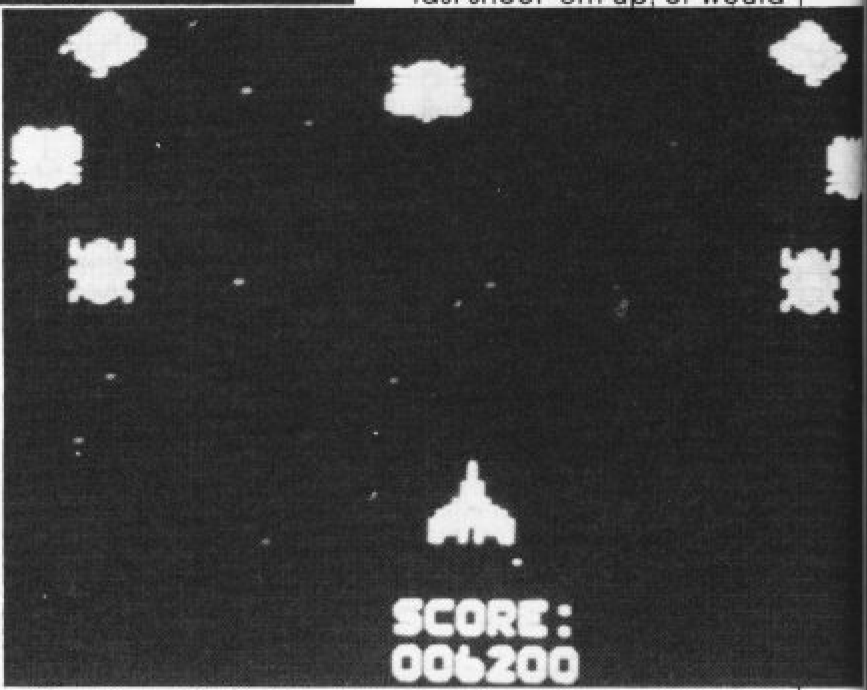
At the start of a game the player's ship materialises at the bottom of the screen, and formations of alien craft appear, fly around, and assemble at the top of the screen. When all are present, the attack starts in earnest and the craft are either shot or dodged. Occasionally a big alien flies down, and when blasted twice releases a neat little gizmo which, when picked up, shoots forward a tractor beam which traps any aliens careless enough to fly into its path. When the beam's effects wear off, the captured aliens assemble on either side of the player's ship and give extra firepower.

When two attack waves of aliens are despatched, the player tackles a bonus screen, where extra points may be earned. A quartet of aliens appear at the top of the screen, and when shot fall downwards. Repeated shooting bounces them back up briefly, and every hit scored creates a little block. As this bizarre juggling continues, the aliens move faster and faster, and the blocks eventually spell out BONUS (if you can keep juggling long enough). When all the aliens have escaped your lasers, points are awarded for the number of hits, which can be quite considerable.

Although the game concept is an old one, *Gaplus* is an enjoyable and frenetic blaster. The gameplay is very straightforward, and boils down to shooting and dodging. But, as is often the case with simple games, it's very addictive indeed.

Although *Gaplus* is a wonderful conversion, some will find its simplistic and somewhat archaic gameplay a little tedious. However, if you're a blasting fanatic who enjoys an uncluttered and fast shoot 'em up, or would just enjoy taking a nostalgic blast to the past, try it out.

Me? I love it!!



▲ *Gaplus: a traditional blast from the past.*

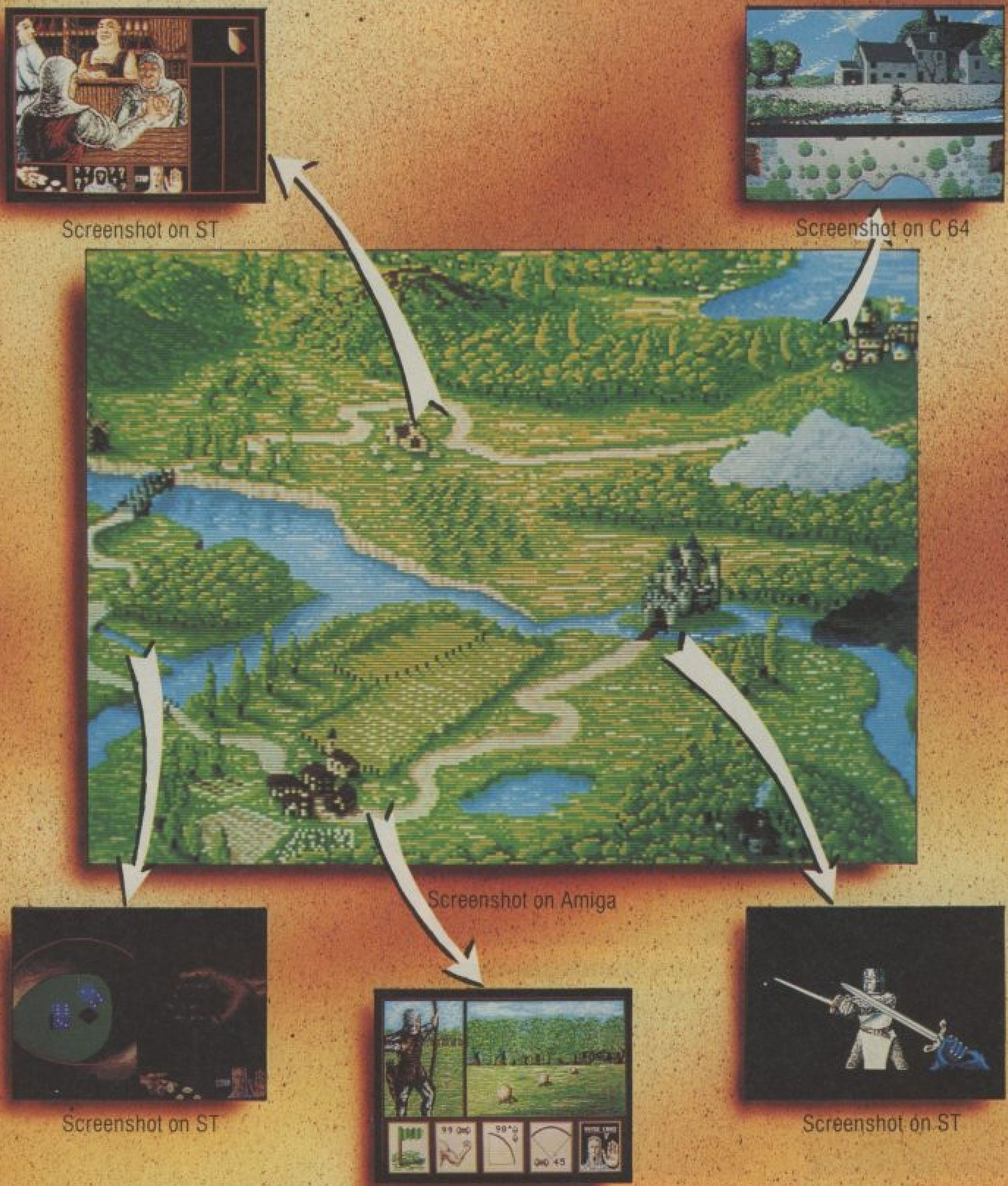
► GRAPHICS	7
► SOUND	7
► VALUE	5
► PLAYABILITY	8
► OVERALL	80%

UPDATE . . .

Unfortunately, Virgin has no plans at present to release any other versions. Sad . . .


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Screenshot on ST

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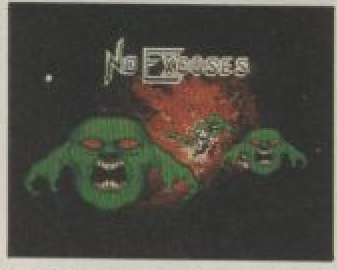
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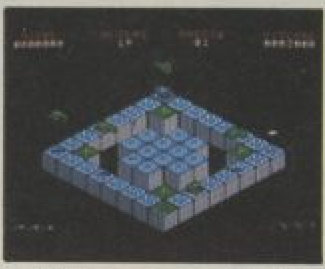
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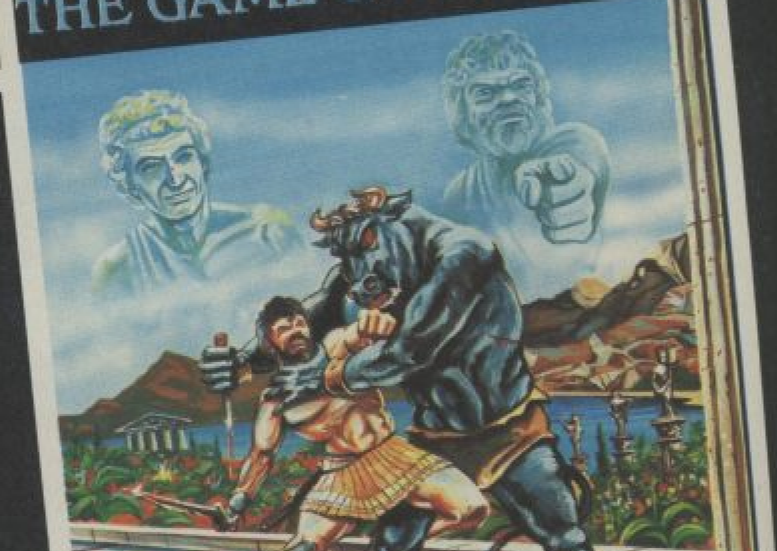






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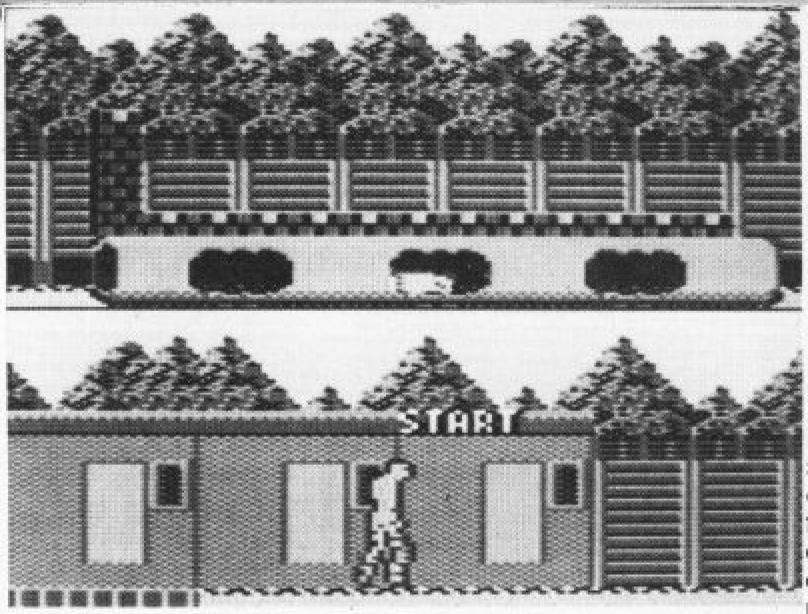
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Reviews



▲ *Thrills and spills galore.*

NATO ASSAULT COURSE

- ► SUPPLIER: CRL.
- ► MACHINES: CBM 64.
- ► PRICES:
- ► VERSION TESTED: CBM 64 DISK.
- ► REVIEWER: GARY WHITTA.

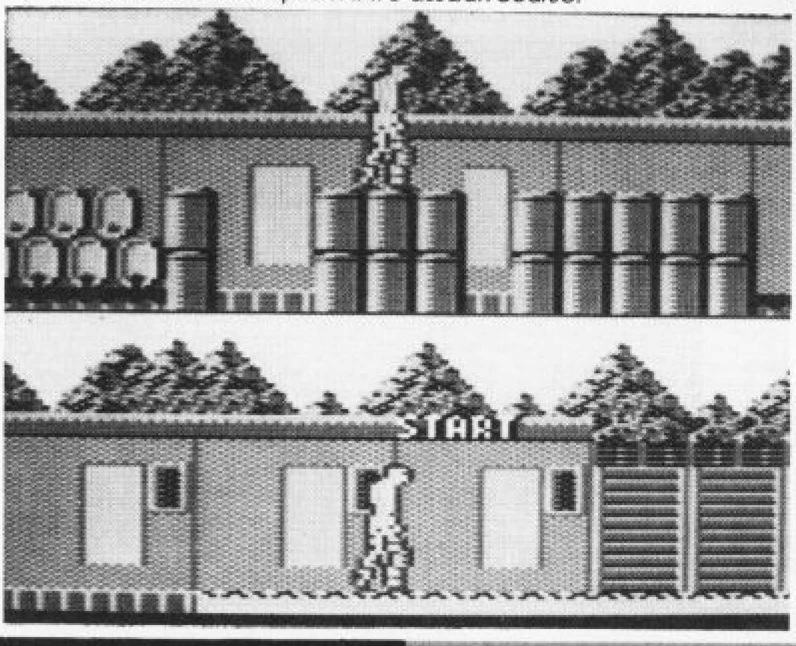
Everyone who's ever wanted to have a go at an assault courses now doesn't have to wait to be selected for the next series of the *Krypton Factor* thanks to CRL's latest release, titled *NATO Assault Course*.

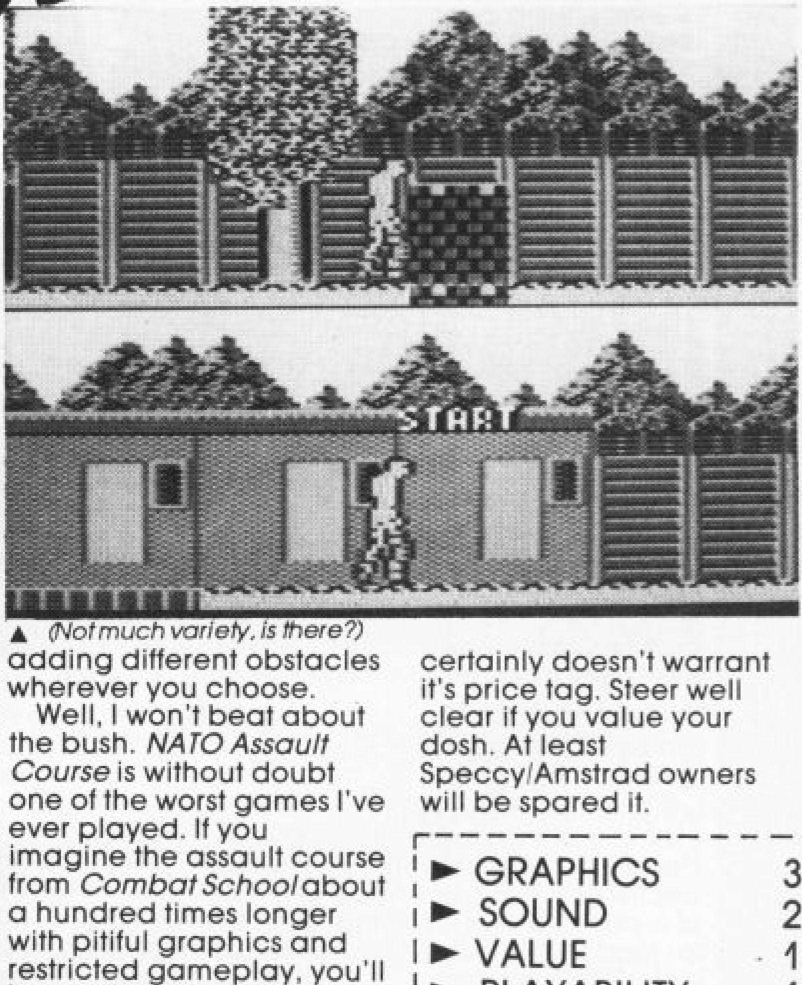
The game casts you as an eager new prospective recruit to the NATO armed forces who has to complete a gruelling assault course before he can be accepted.

After the initial pre-game selections you can get down to actually tackling the assault course. The screen is split horizontally in half into two independent displays, one for each contestant. Progress is made in true *Combat School* fashion, i.e. waggling the joystick as fast as you possibly can.

Walls are no problem to jump over. Just pushing up on the still will send your GI flying over the wall (if you timed it correctly that is). More problematic obstacles come in the form of cardboard soldiers that spring out from the ground and must be shot quickly or they'll shoot you. If you do get shot, or indeed fall foul to any dangerous obstacle such as the firepots, the screen will blank out for a few seconds and you'll be positioned a few screens back from where you died. There's also a course designer option that allows you to build your own course to any level of difficulty you desire by adding different obstacles wherever you choose.

▼ *The action never stops in NATO assault course.*





▲ *(Not much variety, is there?)*

Well, I won't beat about the bush. *NATO Assault Course* is without doubt one of the worst games I've ever played. If you imagine the assault course from *Combat School* about a hundred times longer with pitiful graphics and restricted gameplay, you'll have some idea of what *NATO Assault Course* is like. The game's graphics look like they've seeped out of a three year old budget game. The soldier sprites are so badly defined they look like hunchbacks, and the abysmal animation only serves to make things worse, as the soldier waddle's along at a snail's pace. The backdrops are extremely chunky and very repetitive in design, so you get the impression you keep running over the same bit of course endlessly. The courses are far too long to be realistic, and even after five minutes of furious waggling there's no indication of how far you are to completing it. The whole game seems to be bodged job, and the way that the screen blanks out rather than bothering to scroll the course backwards when you die proves this.

NATO Assault Course rates as one of the worst games of the year, and certainly doesn't warrant it's price tag. Steer well clear if you value your dosh. At least Speccy/Amstrad owners will be spared it.

► GRAPHICS	3
► SOUND	2
► VALUE	1
► PLAYABILITY	1
► OVERALL	11%

Reviews

some consistency and wit.

We kick off with our vulpine hero down in the lair with his fish-wife of a fox-wife, but he is soon turfed out in no uncertain terms to collect dinner "and don't you dare come back without any!"

Mr Foxx is soon loping his way across the countryside in search of tasty morsels, though his search is by no means easy. He is armed with a revolver which he can swap for sub-machine gun or even bazooka at later points,

Only in the end levels can he walk around blasting like your standard shoot – 'em up hero. Enemies to be faced include squirrels who throw explosive nuts from overhead, flying chickens who drop bombs, badgers who lob rocks and – most bizarre of all – fox-hound bikers who approach on motorcyles, and dismount to fire.

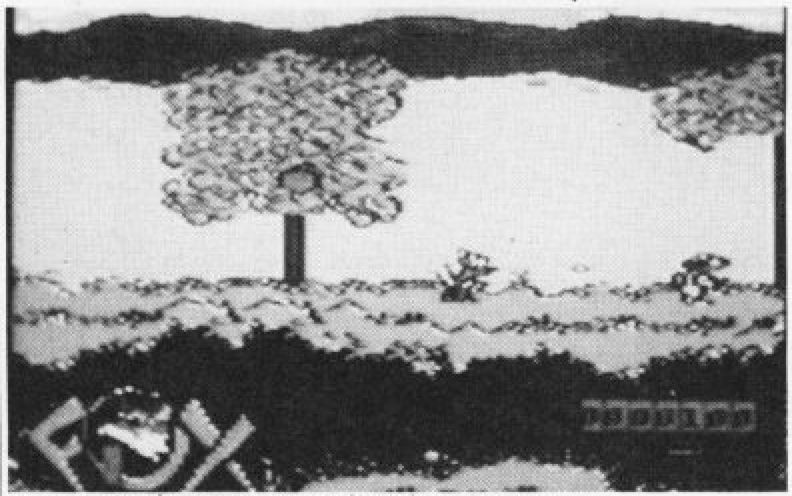
There are various obstacles such as walls and streams that get in your way, and require a degree of jumping skill to negotiate, but you may find that instead of running you should bound along in a series of jumps most of the time anyway – it is just as fast, and can help keep you out of trouble. It takes some timing, but rather than just ducking the flying chickens, many points can be earned if you can jump in the air and catch them in your teeth.

Chickens sleeping in their coops can be gobbled up to keep you bright eyed and bushy tailed (there is a "pant-ometer" – yes, really – at the bottom of the screen, with length of tongue showing how well you're doing) but best – and most vicious of all – is nipping down a rabbit hole to munch up dozy bunnies. These screens work just like the special coin rooms in Super Mario Brothers, though without the hidden extras, and are rather fun, if totally murderous. You begin to think some of the other animals may have a point in going after Mr Foxx after all.

Foxx Fights Back benefits from a large play area and a jolly hunting tunes-type soundtrack. The sprites are rather small, though on the whole well animated, and the scrolling is fine. The relationship between where the sprites can go and background information could be stronger though – you have to stand precariously in space to achieve any of the tougher jumps, for instance, and you are deemed to have eaten a sleeping rabbit if you come within about one and a half fox lengths of it!

All in all, one of the more fun games I've played on the 64 in a while, the cheek and imagination of the scenario being sadly a rare thing.

Not exactly a "must buy" but definitely a strong product, and one unlikely to disappoint.



▲ *Hey, no fair! Foxx gets a beagle in the back.*

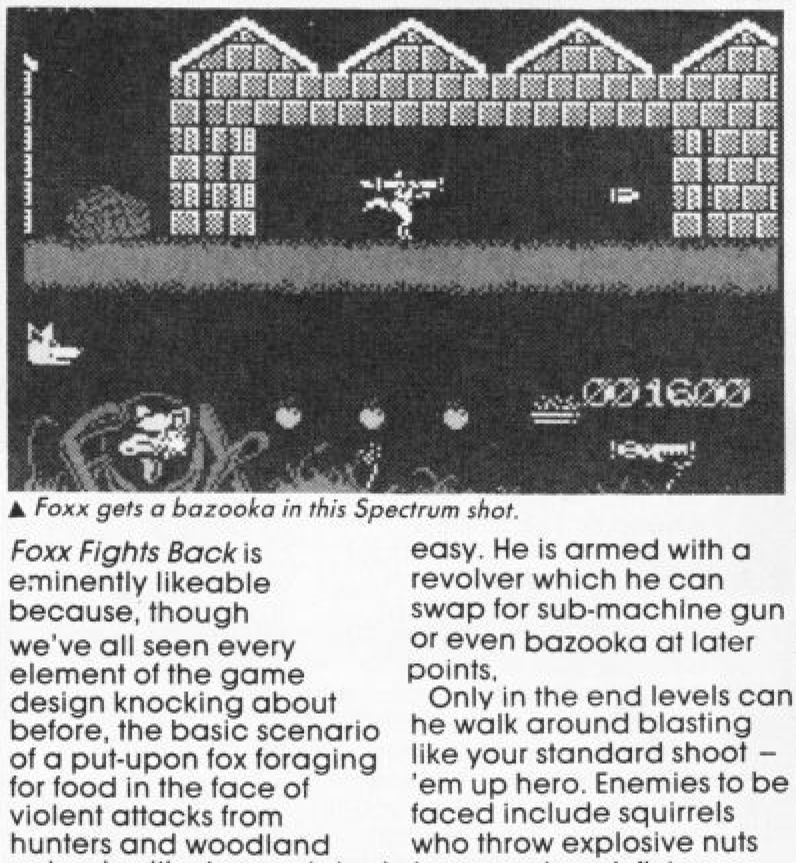
FOXX FIGHTS BACK

► **MACHINES: C64, SPECTRUM.**
► **SUPPLIER: MIRRORSOFT.**
► **PRICE: SPEC CASS £8.99/DISK £12.99, C64 CASS £9.99, DISK £12.99.**
► **VERSION TESTED: C64.**
► **REVIEWER: MATT BIELBY.**

► GRAPHICS	7
► SOUND	7
► PLAYABILITY	7
► VALUE	8
► OVERALL	73%

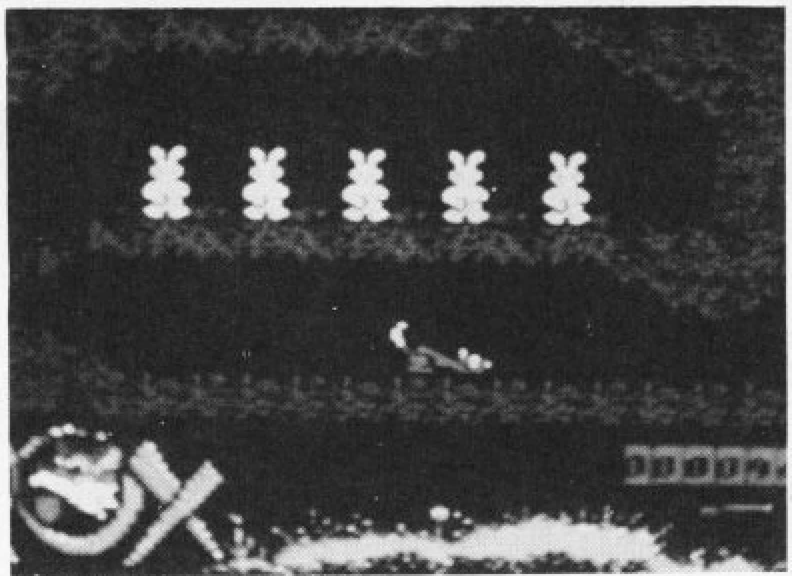
UPDATE . . .

There will be no Amstrad version of Foxx – a bit of a shame that – but no firm action is being taken as yet on 16 bit variants.



▲ *Foxx gets a bazooka in this Spectrum shot.*

Foxx Fights Back is eminently likeable because, though we've all seen every element of the game design knocking about before, the basic scenario of a put-upon fox foraging for food in the face of violent attacks from hunters and woodland animals alike is an original one, and is carried off with



▲ *Gobbling bunnies in the tunnels.*

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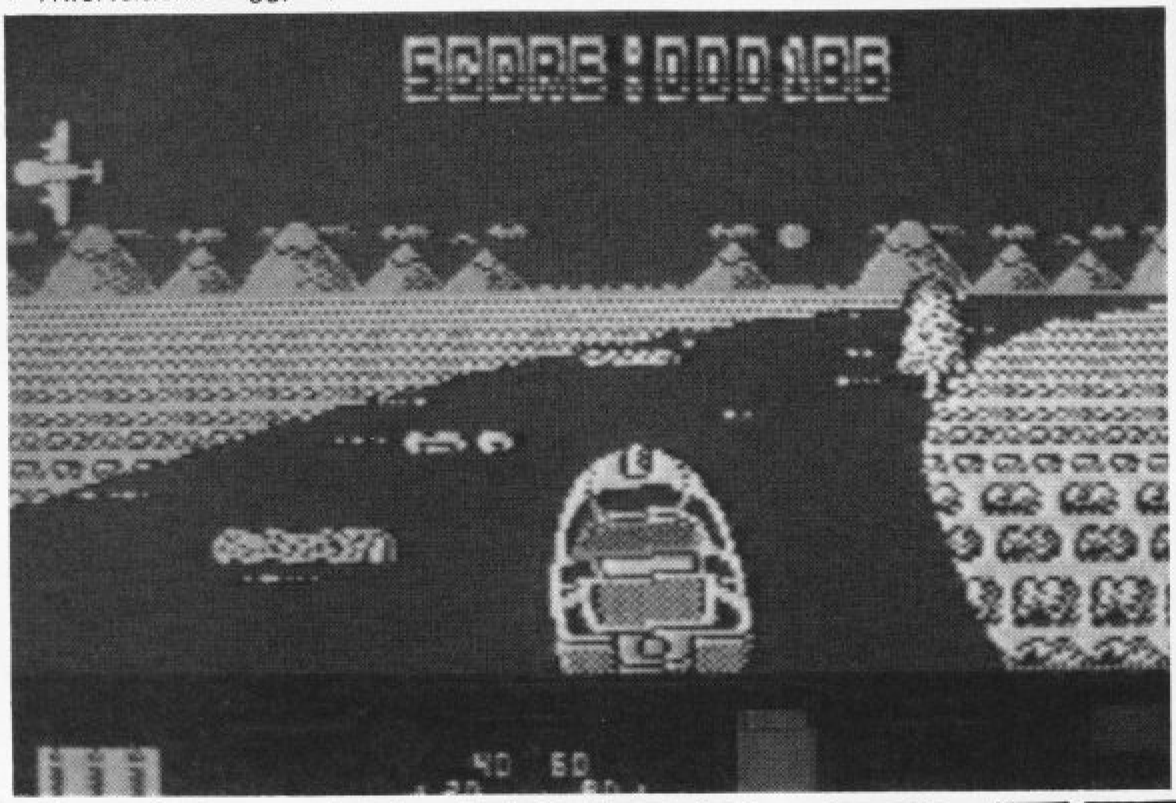
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▼ *A wet version of Buggy Boy!*



► **MACHINES: SPEC, AMS, C64, ST, AMIGA.**
► **SUPPLIER: ELITE.**
► **PRICE: SPEC CASS £8.99, DISC £12.99, C64 CASS £9.99, DISC £11.99, AMS & CASS £9.99, DISC £14.99, ST £19.99, AMIGA £24.99.**
► **VERSION TESTED: SPEC.**
► **REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.**

LIVE & LET DIE

No, I'm not going to make all the obvious statements or remarks, such as isn't it interesting how this game looks remarkably like a game called *Aquablaster* that I saw a while ago, or how come that such an old film is only being licensed now, or *(OK, we get the message – Ed).*

No prizes for guessing that *Live and Let Die* places you in the role of James Bond in one of the most exciting sequences in the film, the death defying speedboat chase along the winding rivers of, er, well somewhere in America. Viewed in much the same way as *Out Run/Roadblasters/* almost any other racing game, except that this time it's on water. In fact, this game reminds me of nothing so much as *Buggy Boy,* complete with gates, underground tunnels and banks on either side of the road that you can drive up to avoid any mines that might just be floating in the water.

Mines are only part of the trouble, however. For the first part you've got to remember that you've only got a very narrow river to ride on, so you've got to try and plan evasive action very carefully, as too many times you go left around an obstacle when you should have gone right and find yourself against a group of mines that you can only get around on the right side and boom!

Enemy boats are also racing up and down the waterways, and it's these that drop the mines. It would be nicer if they dropped them neatly in a line, but oh no, they zig-zag across the river, and it does get amazingly difficult to get around them. Loch gates bar your way at various stages along the rivers (yes, rivers, you get a choice of five at the start of the game) and these need to be shot down with a missile. Unfortunately, you only get three, and you tend to get four gates. And, if all that ain't enough, you have the normal *Roadblasters* cannons at either side of the riverbed.

So, with all this being thrown at you, what have you got on your side? Well, you've got your handy cannon, along with the three missiles. Also, you find at places along the river logs which when run over, catapult you into the air and over obstacles. There are fuel cans (which look amazingly like logs) which give you back some fuel. Should you run out of fuel, it's game over.

The graphics are large and well animated on the Spectrum though, as usual, monochrome. The explosion of the main character is quite nice. The 3D update of the approaching objects is well done, too.

It plays well, with quite a fast joystick response, but I did find the firing a little sticky. It's not too difficult, but it's no walkover either. There's enough there to keep even the most seasoned arcadester playing for a while.

► GRAPHICS	8
► SOUND	6
► VALUE	7
► PLAYABILITY	7
► OVERALL	72%



▲ *A competent game – but you've seen it before . . .*

Reviews

PAC

► **MACHINES: SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD, C64, ATARI ST, AMIGA,MSX.**
► **PRICES: SPEC/AMS/MSX £8.95 CASS, C64 £9.95 CASS, C64/ AMS £14.95 DISK, ST/AMIGA £19.95.**
► **SUPPLIER: GRAND SLAM.**
► **VERSIONS TESTED: ATARI ST, SPECTRUM.**
► **REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.**

The *PacMan* story started in 1982 when Bally Midway released an arcade game in which the player has to guide a little yellow blob, featureless save for a large mouth, around a maze and eat as many dots as possible while avoiding the attentions of four

▼ *PacMan marauds through Block Town.*



marauding ghosts. Public response was phenomenal – there has been nothing like it before or since – and within months you could buy *PacMan* watches, cuddly toys, clockwork toys, T-shirts, underwear, beach towels, mugs . . . You could even watch *PacMan* cartoons on TV and eat *PacMan* sweets! As *PacMan* fever swept across the globe, it seemed that the public had an appetite for *PacMan* products as insatiable as the little yellow fellow had for dots!!

Eager to follow up their success, *Ms PacMan* was released. Basically more of the same, it was designed with the female gamesplayer in mind – although it's true to say the the original PacMan's non-violent game concept had already attracted many female players into the arcades, as well as those to whom shoot 'em ups never appealed.

Next came *Jnr PacMan* – another dot gobbler, this time with a scrolling screen – *Baby PacMan*, a mini pinball-type game, and a full-sized *Mr and Mrs PacMan* pinball machine. Since then there has also been *Professor PacMan*, *PacMan Plus*, *Super PacMan*, *Pacland* (a horizontally scrolling arcade adventure type game) and, bringing us bang up to date, *Pacmania*.

Grand Slam recently bought the conversion rights to the latest installment of the *PacMan* series, and is set to release the game on all formats.

Pacmania is very similar to the original *PacMan* in the respect that the player guides Pac around a maze to collect all the dots, avoiding contact with ghosts. However, instead of a 2D static viewpoint, the game is seen in forced perspective 3D, with the maze scrolling as *PacMan* moves. He's also has the ability to jump – useful, since there are far more ghosts rampaging around the maze.

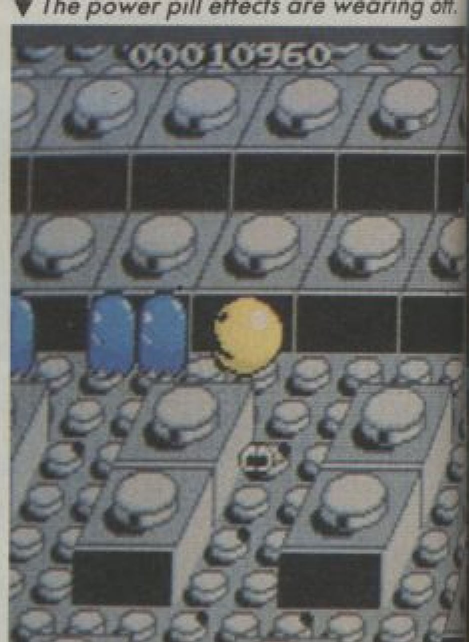
At the start of a game the player selects one of three levels: Block Town, PacMan's Park or Sandbox, and the game begins. If either of the latter levels are chosen, a courage bonus is awarded when the first screen is completed: 50,00 and 100,000 points respectively.

The objective is simple – eat all the dots to move onto the next maze. Deadly ghosts wander around the maze and attempt to corner the yellow hero,

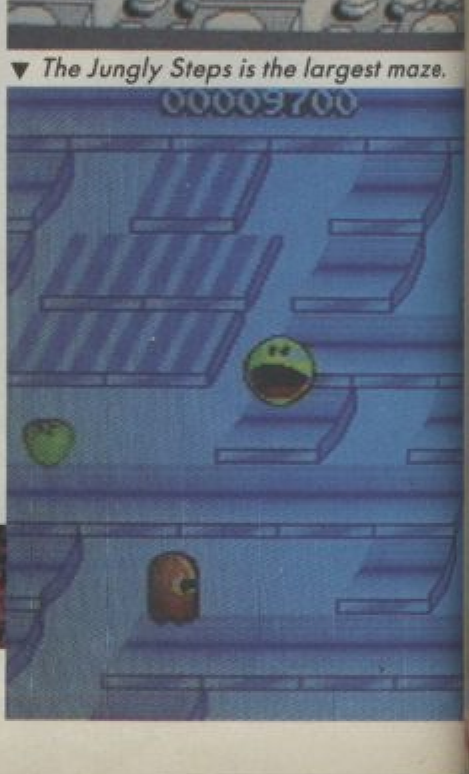
▼ *Ghosts: a post power pill snack!*



▼ *The power pill effects are wearing off.*



▼ *The Jungly Steps is the largest maze.*



MANIA



off.



ze.



and he can either attempt to avoid them entirely, jump over them, or head for the nearest power pill and be granted temporary invincibility. During this period, the ghosts turn blue and are destroyed if PacMan touches them. The supernatural horrors re-appear shortly after and continue the chase with renewed vigour.

Occasionally a bonus fruit target appears in the middle of the maze and is picked up for bonus points. Sometimes this target takes the form of a special pill,

▼ *Quick! Grab that power pill.*



which gives *PacMan* extra speed.

This is particularly useful if you can grab a power pill, as it allows you to track down and destroy large numbers of ghosts and boost your score!

There are four different maze designs in all: the three previously mentioned and the Jungly Steps, the largest of them all. As the player progresses, the going gets increasingly more difficult, with faster and more intelligent ghosts, some of whom are capable of jumping, thus neutralising *PacMan's* one advantage. Power pills also become less effective. When all four levels have been conquered, play starts again on the first, but the going is even harder . . . and so until all five lives are lost.

Although the *PacMan* theme is a very old and simplistic idea, *Pacmania* is enjoyable and highly addictive. It has a timeless appeal lacking in a lot of of today's software, and is the sort of game that gets loaded months after it was first bought, just for a couple of quick goes.

The graphics and sound are very similar to the arcade machine, and the screen scrolls smoothly in all four directions – no mean feat for the ST!

So, if you're looking for a neat and appealling arcade conversion, give Pacmania a go; I doubt whether you'll be able to resist its charms.

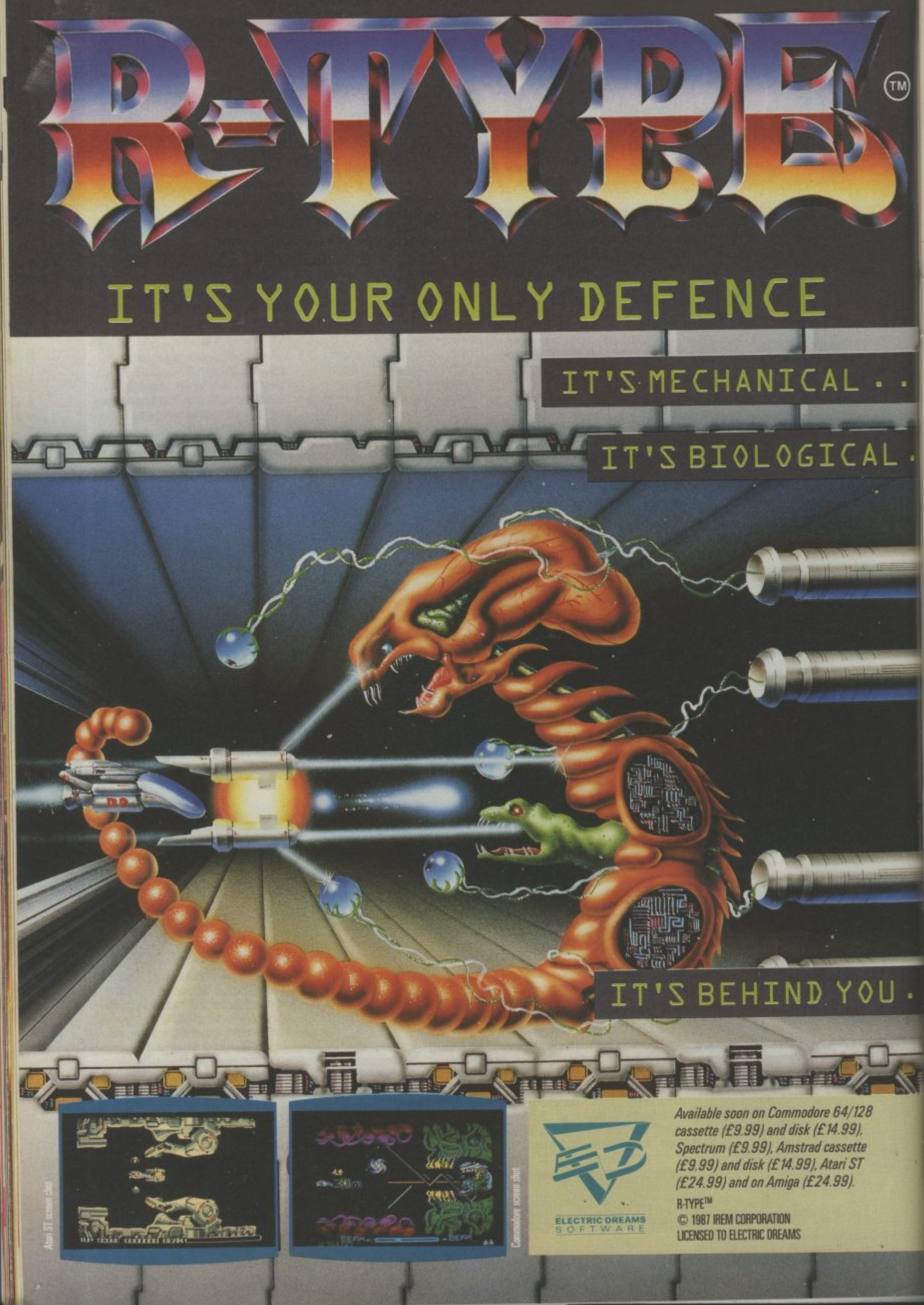
	ST	SPEC
► GRAPHICS	7	8
► SOUND	7	5
► VALUE	6	7
► PLAYABILITY	9	9
► OVERALL	83%	87%

UPDATE . . .

The Spectrum version is monochromatic, but plays very well indeed and sports all the features of the arcade original.

Amstrad and Commodore 64 versions should also retain much, if not all of the arcade game's feel and appeal, and Grand Slam is confident that both will play as well as the Spectrum and ST versions.

The Amiga version is looking exceptionally good. Featuring full-screen scrolling and graphics ported directly from the arcade machine (it's claimed), it looks as though it'll be nigh on perfect: look out for it.



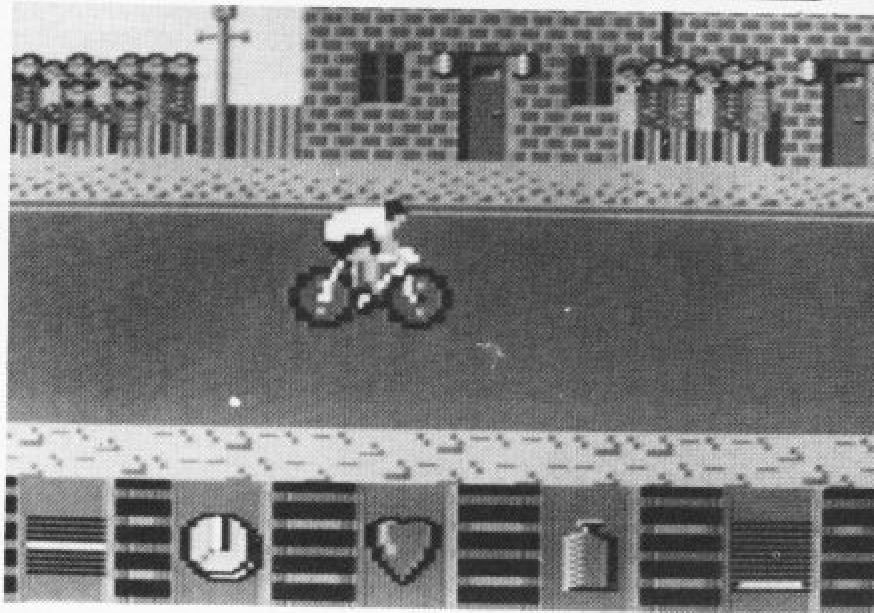
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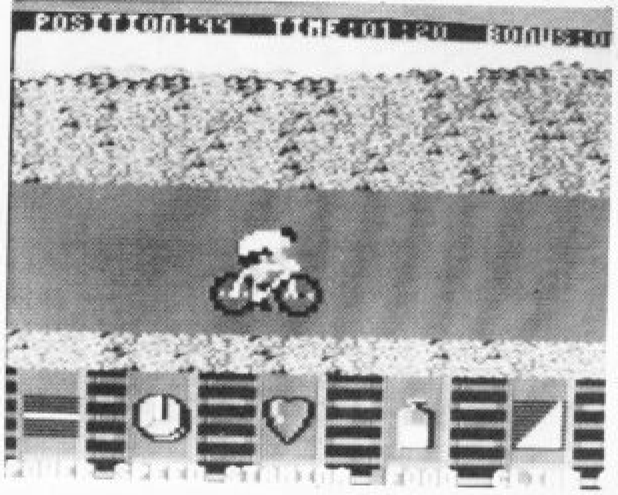
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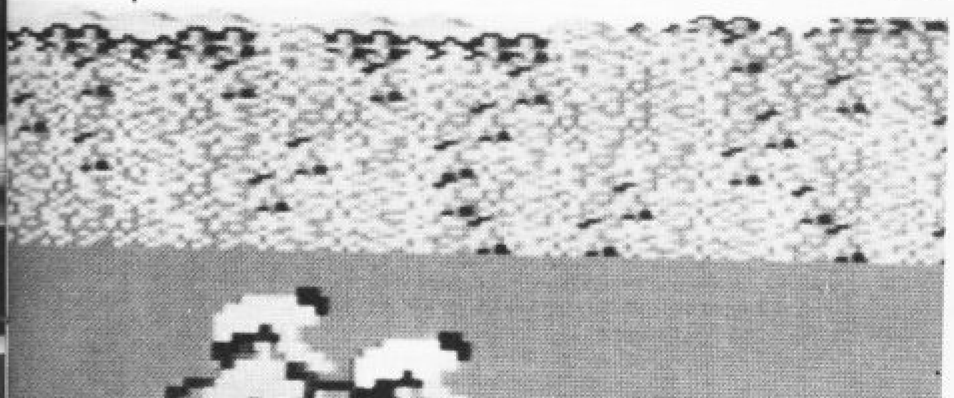
- ► MACHINES: C64 SPEC.
- ► SUPPLIER: CRL.
- ► PRICE: TO FOLLOW.
- ► VERSION TESTED: C64.
- ► REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.

Now there is a new bandwagon for software companies to clamber onto. First, there was the 'Official coin-op' bandwagon. Then there was the 'Officially endorsed by a famous and well loved sports personality' bandwagon. Now, there's the 'Make it about a breakfast cereal' fad. Following hot on the heels of the press releases concerning the soon-to-be-launched Coco Pops game, *(Joke!)* here's the Official Game of the *Kellogg's Tour* of Britain.

For those of you who don't know, the Tour of Britain is a cycle race from Newcastle to Westminster – 678 miles in all. Divided into six stages, the cyclists involved have to try and get to the front of the pack and complete the course in the fastest possible time, collecting different coloured jerseys along the way. If, for example, they reach the top of a particularly steep hill and end up in first place the pinnacle, they are given a white jersey, some bonus time and get awarded the title, King of the Mountain (which just happens to be a mega rockin' track off Kiss' platinum album, Asylum). Certain routes are sectioned off. Once you enter these sections, the idea is to sprint through them in the fastest possible time. If you manage to beat the previous record, you get another jersey and a time bonus. By the way, you also get a jersey if you win a stage. After a while, I can see you getting pretty hot with all those jerseys on.







Still, how has the 64 version fared in the computerised translation. The best way to describe it is a cross between *Milk Race* and the cycling event in *Summer Games 2*, though not a patch on either. The problem is that there's no variation. Even the hills are only represented by a slope-o-graph thingy at the bottom of the screen. Maybe I can stick it for a stage or two, but for six! Forget it! Boredom city!

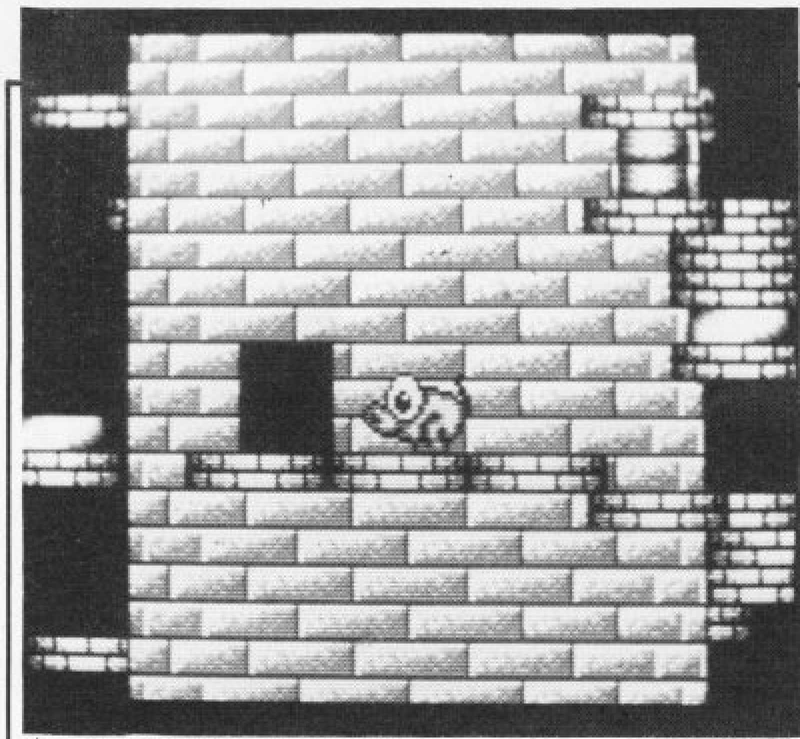
I might be tempted to like this a little bit more were the gameplay of any excitement, but continuous joystick waggling with a bit of the old fire button thrown in here and there completely fails to excite me. Add graphics that would have embarassed a VIC 20 and you've not got much of a game.

This game goes against everything Kellogg's has ever stood for. You know what I mean; life, sunshine, happiness, smiling families. Still, if this game sends you to sleep, you can always have a sunny bowl of Corn Flakes when you wake up.

► GRAPHICS	3
► SOUND	4
► PLAYABILITY	7
► VALUE	2
► OVERALL	23%

UPDATE

CRL has mentioned no plans as present for any further versions of Kellogg's Tour, and as they have now missed the publicity associated with having the real thing televised for a year, it is unlikely they will ever go ahead with it – especially after reading this review!



▲ *The little green alien ponders.*

► **MACHINES: C64/SPECTRUM/ST/AMIGA.**
► **SUPPLIER: HEWSON.**
► **PRICE: SPEC/C64 £9.99 CASS, ST/AMIGA £19.99.**
► **VERSIONS TESTED: ST/AMIGA.**
► **REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.**

NEBULUS

Isn't it strange how a simple computer game can evoke such emotions. Take *Nebulus* for example. Since I started playing it a couple of hours ago I've broken a joystick, screamed colourful metaphors at the computer and made a large dent in the filing cabinet. And still I keep going back to it.

The 8-bit versions of *Nebulus* had similar effects when they were released towards the end of last year, but now it has been released in 16-bit form, complete with vastly improved graphics, better sound and sixteen towers – the original eight that appeared in the first versions, and eight new and even more torturous ones!

For those who missed out, and you really did miss out, *Nebulus* is a platform game – albeit a strange one. The objective is to guide a little green alien to the top of a series of constructions that tower out of the sea by negotiating the steps that run around the outisde of the building.

The action is presented in 3D, with the tower rotating and scrolling vertically to keep the character central to the screen as he moves up and around. The effect is tremendous, as everything moves in full perspective as the tower scrolls.

The route to the top of a tower is a very precarious one, and every step is fraught with hazards. Not only to some platforms disappear when the alien steps on them, but there are also slippery floors to avoid. Immovable blocks sometimes bar the way, but these are easily destroyed by blowing a bubble at them.

Sometimes gaps in the platforms are encountered, but can usually be crossed by leaping the chasm, and there are also doors which are entered to take the alien to the other side of the tower – although these occasionally lead to danger.

Robotic guards are in abundance and follow set patterns. Some move up and down, while others circle the tower. Flying objects emerge from the sides of the screen and travel across the playing area, and bouncing balls occasionally appear, although these are disposed of with a well-aimed bubble.

Just to make matters worse, each tower is played under a strict time limit, and if this expires before the alien enters the door at the top of the tower, another life is lost.

If the door is entered, the tower is razed to the ground and the alien makes his way to the next one by means of a bonus screen where a mini-submarine is driven under the horizontally scrolling sea. Fish drift on from the right and are shot and collected to ammass extra time for the forthcoming level – which comes in very useful.

Nebulus is simply brilliant. It's crystal clear objectives and unpretentious gameplay conspire to provide one of the most playable and challenging programs around. The balance between frustration and addiction is perfect, allowing you to progress a little further with every game.

Supporting the gameplay are some tremendous graphics. The use of colour is superb – I've never seen so many colours on-screen at the same time, and the sprites are excellent.

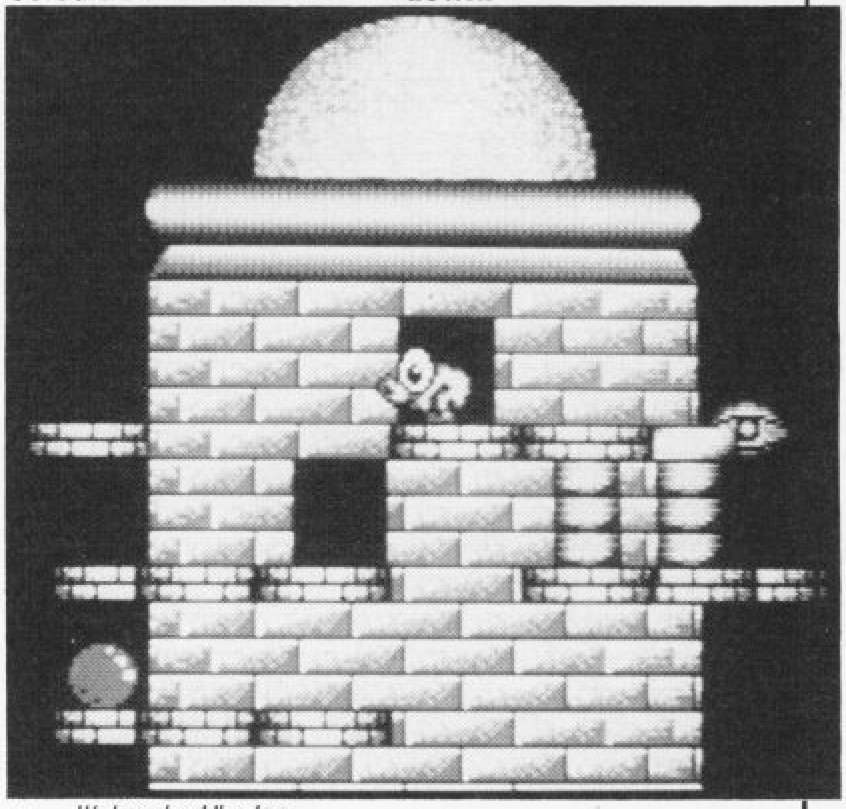
There are some unusual sampled sitar sounds heralding the beginning of a screen and the end of a game, and the sound effects are pretty good. The title screen music is also good, with the Amiga version having the edge over the slightly tinny ST tune.

Whether you're an ST or Amiga version, don't let this classic escape you.

	AMIGA	ST
► GRAPHICS	9	9
► SOUND	6	7
► VALUE	8	8
► PLAYABILITY	9	9
► OVERALL	96%	96%

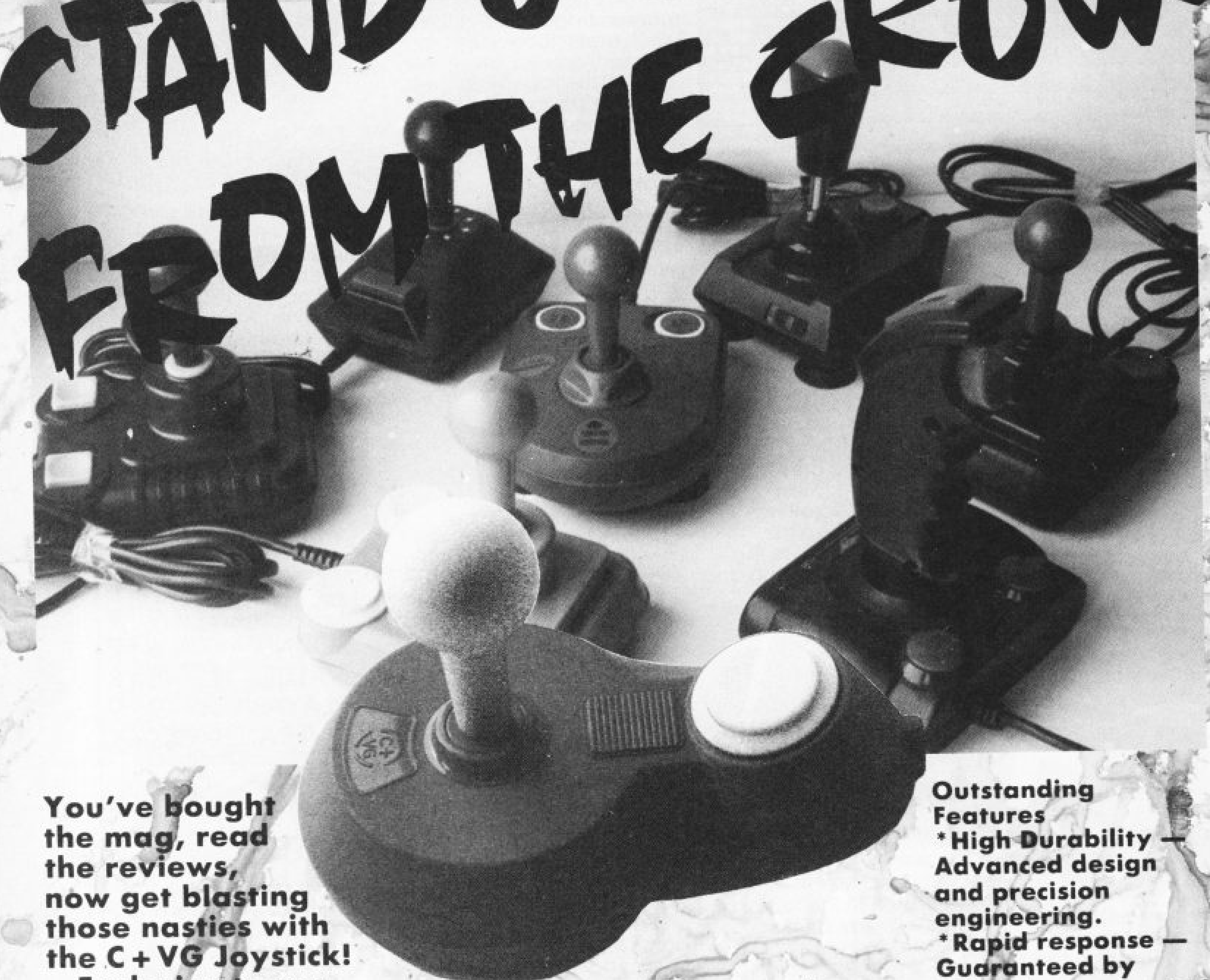
UPDATE . . .

Spectrum and Commodore versions had a rapturous reception when they appeared at the end of last year; if you haven't already got it for your machine, hunt it down.



▲ *It's tough at the top.*

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Speeball is the sport of the future. A rough, tough game where only the strong survive.

Inspired by the film *Rollerball*, in which James Caan plays a futuristic gladiator, *Speedball* is a vicious sport of the future where no prisoners are taken. Punching your opponent and bribing the officials are essential tactics.

These guys are mean. If you thought Wimbledon's Vinny Jones was a bit of a lad then forget it. He wouldn's last five seconds with these crash-helmeted bruisers.

Speedball players dress to kill. An opening sequence shows one of the players pulling on a leather glove, impregnated with metal studs.

Their metal and leather garb sets the scene for the game which is very absorbing to play – as well as creating a totally believable sci-fi world.

The game itself is fought out between two five-a-side teams. The metal ball spins out from a revolving dispenser which comes up out of the centre of the pitch and sinks down again once the ball is in play.

The action is fast and furious as the five players scroll up and down screen on the relatively small play area.

The ball can be bounced off walls – thrown or punched nearly the entire length of the pitch and almost anything is allowed in the frenzied struggle to get the ball in the net.

If you have ever played *Xenon* you will notice an immediate similarity. The hallmark of the hot new programming team – the Bitmap Brothers – is their neat metallic graphic effects and smoothness of scrolling. *Speedball* is near perfect in these two departments.

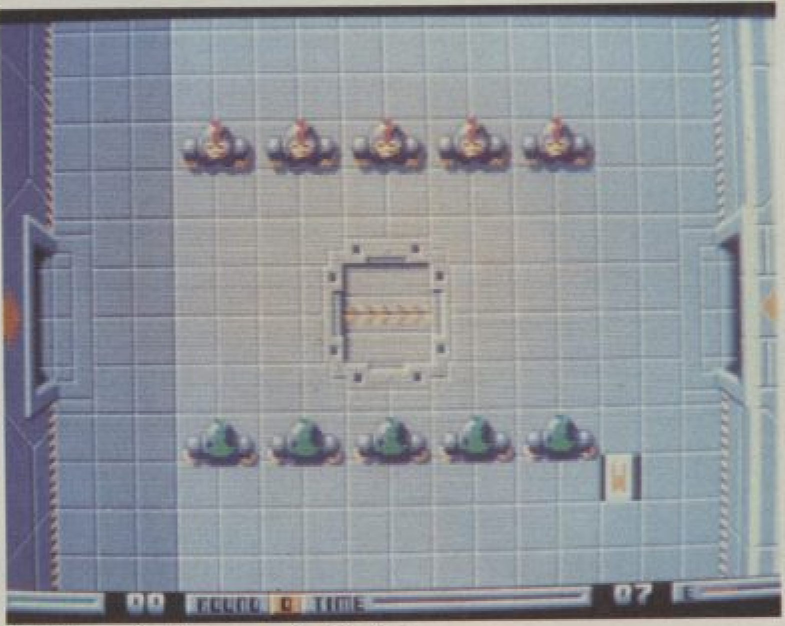
There's bags of strategy in the game. Passing is difficult but worthwhile. Just like any good computer soccer game, the key to it is making the passing of the ball a key element of game play. Moving the ball one player to another, gaining ground, and positioning your attacker to make a strike.

Further strategy elements are offered by the revolving coins that appear on the pitch periodically. Your players have to grab as many as possible to trade at the end of each game for extra speed, stamina and power.

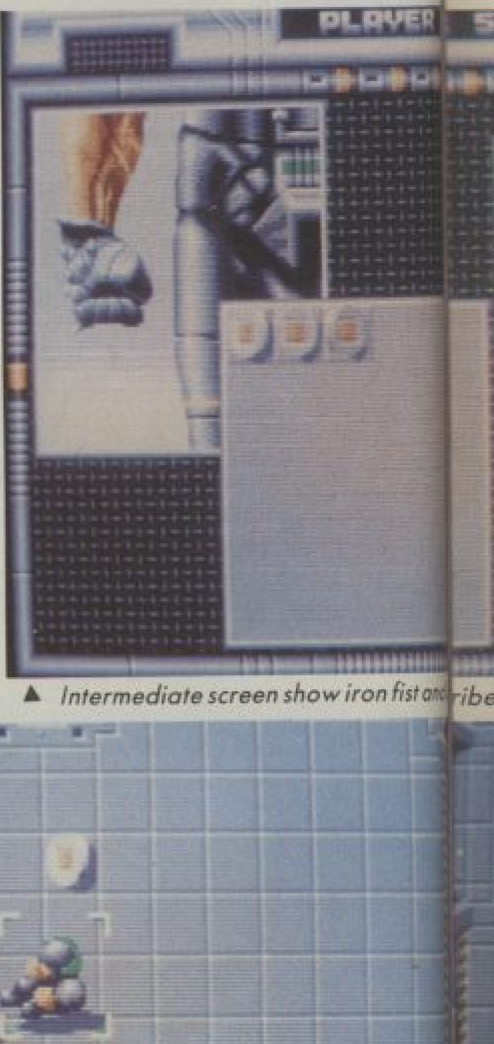
Building the team is essential as *Speedball* is on a league table basis with full save game facilities for maximum long term enjoyment.

There are eleven teams in the league with their names taken from Greek mythology. The team captains are also named and the game gives you a full status report on each squad.

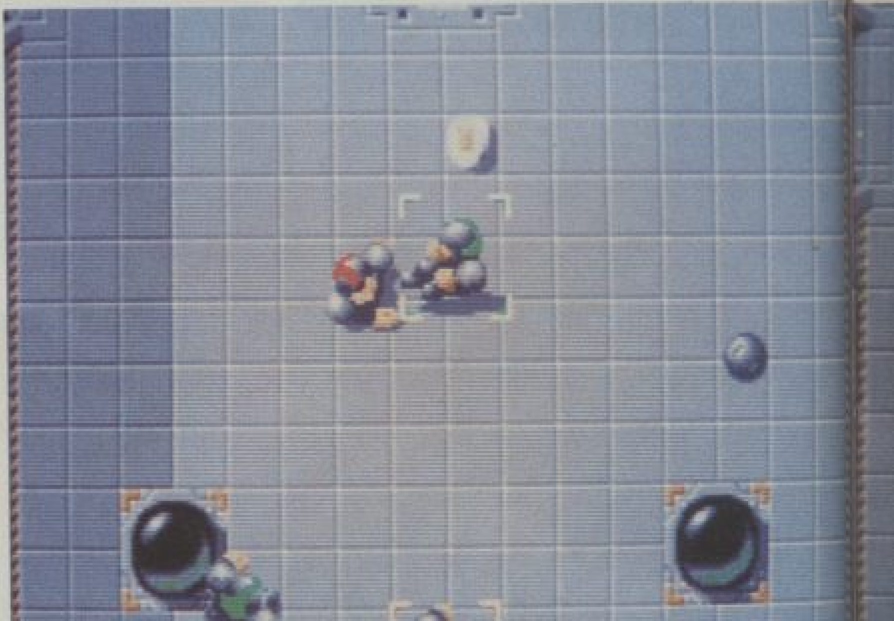
The Bitmap's couldn't resist getting a little plug in for their shoot 'em up



▲ *Line up for the game of millenium.*



▲ *Intermediate screen show iron fist and ribe*

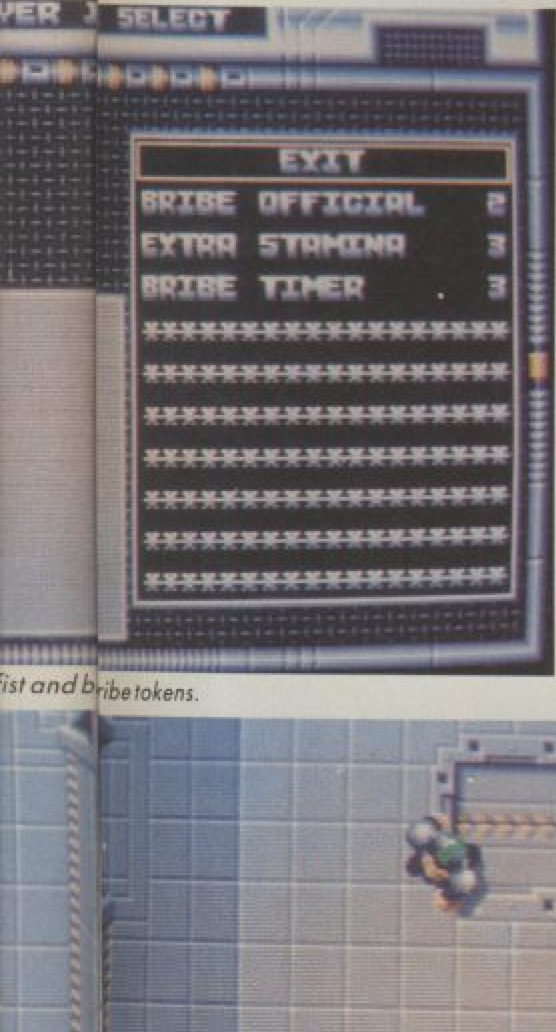


▲ *The ball soars skyward's as players race for the token.*

ED
ALL



▲ *The distinctive Bitmap's metallic look graphics.*



ist and bribe tokens.

Xenon. One team captain being named after the game.

As well as the trading element with the coins, there are also eight letters and a question mark. When picked up these range in their effects from reversing the joystick direction, decreasing your opponent's stamina, getting the ball automatically, freezing your opponent and making you tackle proof.

Off the ball gamesmanship includes a feature where you can punch an opponent if neither of you are in possession and my notes on the game include this charming little tip – "Another ploy is to lob the ball towards the opponent's goal from halfway upfield, then foul the goalie with another player as he attempts to catch it".

The real key to *Speedball* is mastering the art of passing and catching – the ball can be plucked from the air by making your player leap by pressing the fire button.

There are a number of moves that can be implemented with the joystick which all add up to making *Speedball* much more than a mad dash around the pitch in an attempt to score goals.

Playing against the computer in *Speedball* is fun but is really only for practice. This game comes into its own as a two player challenge.

It is difficult to fault *Speedball*. You know as soon as it boots that you have a piece of quality software in your computer.

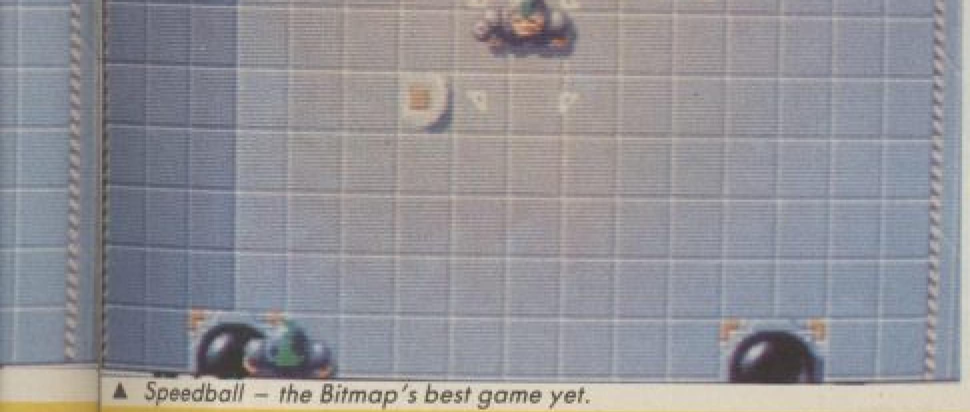
If I were to pick on anything I would say that the sound effects could have been improved together with the method of picking up and using lettered power ups.

That said, *Speedball* is going to be a monster hit. It turns the well worn sci-fi theme of future sports into a thumping good computer game.

► GRAPHICS	8
► SOUND	6
► VALUE	7
► PLAYABILITY	9
► OVERALL	84%

UPDATE . . .

Image Works is investigating the possibility of a 64 version but at this stage admits that it is looking doubtful. Amiga and ST versions are now complete and will be on sale soon. An IBM PC and compatibles version is being coded but it will require a minimum of 512K to run. Image Works recently announced the signing of a deal with the Bitmap Brothers to publish their next three games. Watch this space for news of these.



▲ *Speedball – the Bitmap's best game yet.*

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BIG Screen

"Hallo'," to all you horror hounds as weird Ward R. Street mixes a witches brew of new movie releases for halloween.

How big is a big film? Absolutely huge – at least if **Big** (PG) is its title. *Big* has raked in the big bucks all across America – and that's despite the fact that it bears an uncanny similarity to *Vice Versa,* which appeared here in July, plus a couple of other American movies which never made it across the Atlantic.

The supernatural story-line that has given Hollywood its bad case of *deja vu* is that old chestnut about young boys who become grown men overnight. Ward's guess is that a lot of middle aged producers have been regretting the good old days of their lost youth recently! But what really matters is which is better – *Vice Versa's* role reversal or these *Big* jobs?

Big has a big, brat pack star, Tom Hanks, but you don't get to see him until after 12-year-old Josh has made a wish on an archaic arcade machine which transforms him from a troubled teen into a thirty-five year old man overnight. Let's face it – being handsome Tom Hanks is one hell of a help when it comes to picking up girls. But Josh's parents don't take too kindly to a 'stranger' strolling down for breakfast and pretty soon their son is on the run with his best friend Billy, who helps him hide out in a sleazy New York hotel.

It may sound like a dream to be an instant adult, but pretty soon Josh discovers that it means finding a job and earning a living, all of which makes school sound pretty hip. However an opening in a toy company gives the big boy his first foot on the ladder to success. Who could be better when it comes to telling a toy manufacturer how to succeed than a twelve year old?

Billy's search for the fairground machine which will return his friend to normal, and Josh's affair with a beautiful colleague who doesn't realise that the guy she's falling head over heeds with is young enough to be her son, make for an entertaining hour and three quarters, poking fun at a lot of so-called 'grown up' behaviour. Tom Hanks cleverly suggests a twelve year old adrift in the adult



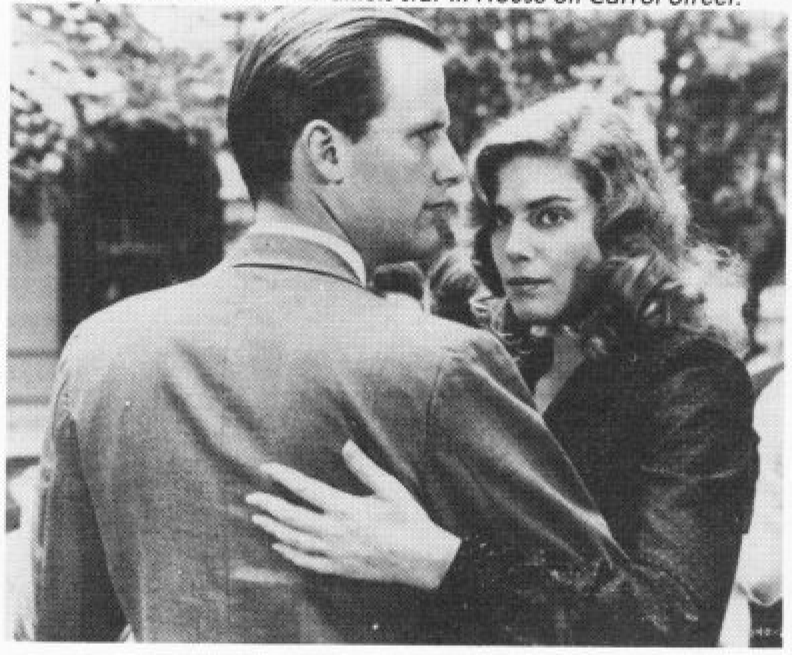
▲ *Tom Hanks proves that he's just a big kid at heart.*

world and if, in the end, I preferred *Vice Versa,* the public has picked *Big,* so see them both and make up your own mind.

There are more strange doings down at **The House on Carroll Street** (PG), but they're not of the supernatural sort. Instead we're in the world of spying, FBI agents and illegal immigrants, all hanging around the New York address. It's the sort of thing that could get the neighbourhood a bad name!

In 1951 America was plunged into paranoid hysteria of a kind not seen since the Salem witch hunts sent innocent old women to the stake. The targets of this persecution were supposed communists and the chief inquisitor was Senator Joe McCarthy, who whipped up such a storm of fear and loathing that anybody who was not a rabid right-winger was suspect.

▼ *Kelly McGillis and Jeff Daniels star in House on Carrol Street.*



Emily Crane is just such a victim. Unwilling to accept McCarthy's madness she loses her job on a magazine and is forced to take a menial post reading books to a rich old lady. One afternoon strolling in the woman's garden, she hears voices from a neighbouring window – German voices – and her suspicions draw her into a deadly plot.

Emily Crane is just the sort of strong woman we see all to seldom in the cinema – yes, girls are good for things other than screaming and being rescued by big, butch man. Kelly McGillis is the perfect choice to play her. However even a tough dame can't always get out of trouble by herself, so it's a good thing Jeff *(Something Wild)* Daniels is around to give her a helping hand-gun!

Director Peter Yates knows just what makes a good thriller – remember *Bullitt?* – and as the conspiracy deepens and evil McCarthyite investigator Salwen, slimily played by Mandy Patinkin, closes his claws around the couple, the suspense builds. It all culminates in a chase in the classic Hitchcock style which should keep you on the edge of your seat to very last moment.

If *Carroll Street* contains all that was best about old fashioned mysteries, **Nico** (18) demonstrates what's worst about modern cop films. It's slick and sick, sleazy and noisy, with little logic but apparently possessed of a belief that you have to throw in an explosion or some other violence every five minutes just to keep the audience awake.

Nico Toscanini grew up on the heavy South Side of Chicago, trained as a martial arts master before serving with the CIA in Vietnam, then, haunted by memories of a brutal interrogation specialist named Zagon, who was a dab hand with a hypodermic full of dangerous drugs, he became a cop. No surprises that he's hardly the friendly bobby on the beat!

continued on page 70 ▶

BIG Screen

In fact Nico is a fully fledged police psychopath of the shoot first school. One day, while cheerfully roughing up a low-life dope dealer, he's told of a smuggling operation – only instead of drugs the shipment contains explosives, which lead him back to his arch-nemesis, the hypo happy Zagon. Who'd have thought?

The film contains one scene of arm-snapping violence which even had a cinema of hardened critics reaching for the barf bags – or laughing aloud at the grossness of it all! Somewhere in the sound and fury is an attack on US involvement in Central America – but it's hardly enough to redeem this gratuitously grotty epic.

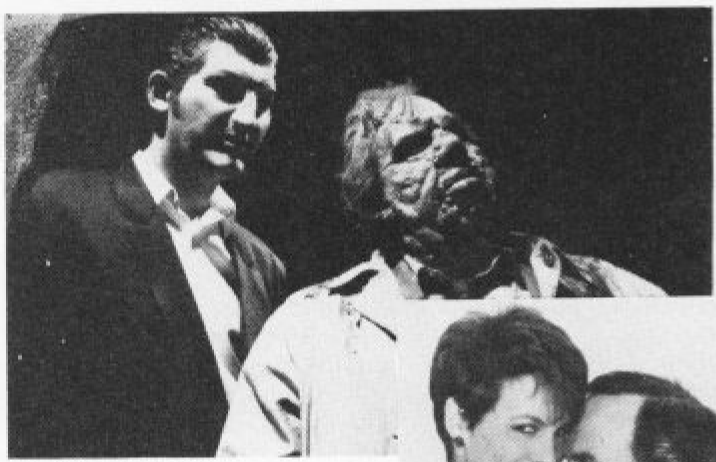
From horrors of the human kind to supernatural nasties, as Britain's answer to *Nightmare on Elm Street* tries to disturb your slumbers. Unluckily the ***Dream Demon*** (18) aims to be rather more arty than Freddie's fear fests, which could send gore hounds to sleep rather than making them gag.

Sloaney Diana – well, she'd have to be, sharing a name with a Princess – is about to marry dashing Falklands hero Oliver in a perfect, rural English church. Then she slaps him and his head falls off and . . . well, you guessed – it's all a dream! But it's a reasonable beginning for a tale where the waking and sleeping worlds become increasingly intertwined. Unfortunately the film proceeds to descend not into hell but towards the bargain basement and boredom.

Alone in her London flat, the nightmares continue to haunt Di, while outside she's besieged by a couple of low-life, sensation seeking journalists. Wot, belching, boozing hacks working for the great British press? Never!!! Actually, these two News of the Screws rejects are supposed to be from a local paper, which is a little unlikely to say the least. Worse, they're played by Jimmy Nail and Tim Spall, of Auf Wiedersehen Pet fame – two fine actors working alone, but teamed together you can't help wondering when 'London', Bomber and the rest are going to appear!



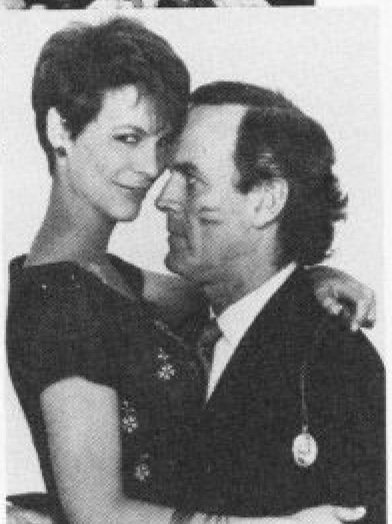
▲ Nico.



▲ Dream Demon.

A gothic-y American girl, Jenny, befriends Di in the most unlikely fashion, and before you can say, 'Welcome to my Nightmare' she too is part of yet another bad dream of a British movie. There are a few moments of ghoulish humour, such as Tim Spall degenerating into a monstrous, pustulant glutton, but they're not really worth staying awake for.

Those things that go bump in *Poltergeist III* (18) have also scared everyone so much that the film, which I reviewed in August, has been put back to this month. However despite some very clever tricks with mirrors it's all fairly ordinary stuff, which somehow manages to leave one of its characters trapped on 'the other side' and nobody giving a damn about his fate. I'm just calling in an excorcist in case it means yet another sequel!



▼ A Fish Called Wanda. ▶



There should have been a mixed assortment of laughs for hard centred ghouls in ***Consuming Passion*** (15), the story how human flesh in a batch of chocolates boost a fading sweets company's sales figures. But this dark comedy is plain, soft centred and sickly, which is all the more amazing as it's based on an idea by Monty Python's Michael Palin and Terry Jones.

Ian Littleton is an ambitious young trainee at Chumley's Chocolates (doesn't that name warn you what to expect?) whose clumsy incompetence causes a workman to slip into a production line vat and emerge as a filling for the cream assortment. Inevitably the public takes to the new taste and Farris, the company's brash new manager, puts money before morals as he realises that cannibalism is the recipe to strike it rich. *Consuming Passions* is badly written, clumsily directed and sloppily acted. A real passion killer, in fact.

But just as you're about to give up on British films, along swims ***A Fish Called Wanda*** (15), also involving a former Python, John Cleese as a starchy barrister, Archie Leach, who finds himself falling in with a gangster's moll, played by the delectable Jamie Lee Curtis, and suddenly discovering that there is more to life than his middle class career and family.

Cleese is one of the funniest men in Britain and the increasingly bizarre experiences which he undergoes give him every opportunity to make the most of his talents. Also watch out for Michael Palin, redeeming his hand in those flesh filled choccies, as the owner of the fish called Wanda, who gets chips stuck up his nose by an American thug. The film has been a huge success in the US of A, proving that when we Brits get it right we can hold our own with any Hollywood production. Bait your hook and catch this one when it surfaces near you!

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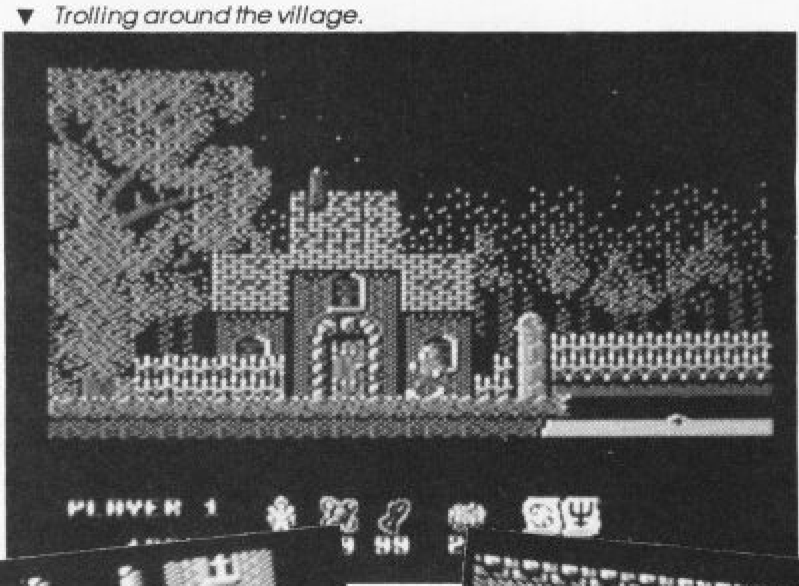
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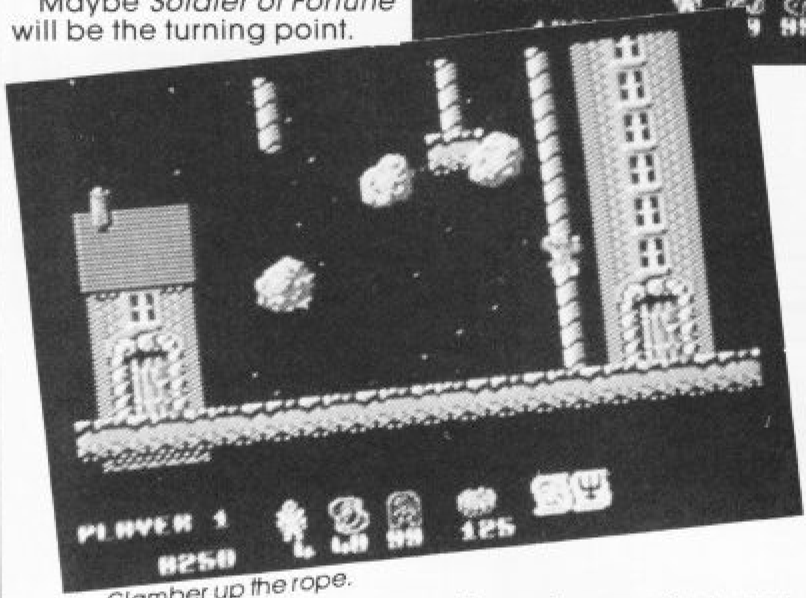
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In the last few months, the legal wobblies over Graftgold have tended to cause more excitement than their games. In the battle between Hewson and Telecomsoft over the rights to programmers Andrew Braybrook and Steve Turner's work, no-one seems to have come out best; so far, Firebird have come up with *Magnetron* (very much a re-run of *Quazatron)* and *Morpheus*, a pretty but unplayable shoot- 'em-up.

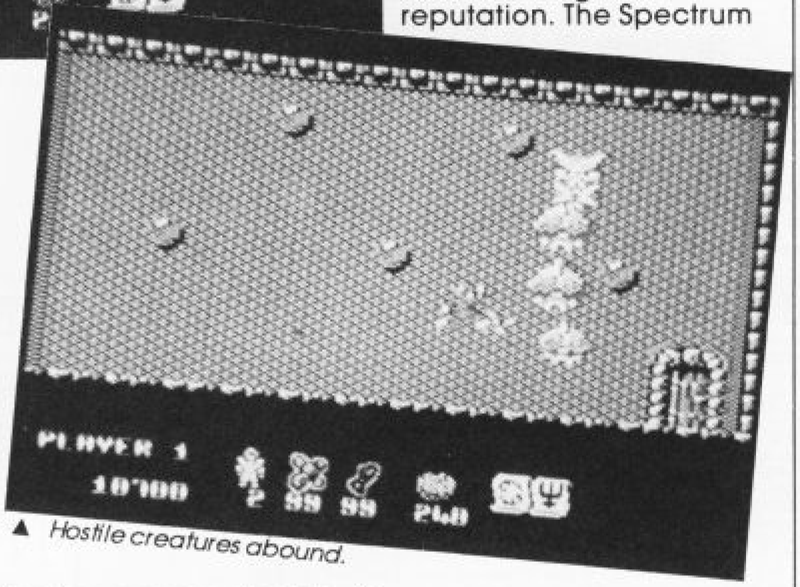
Maybe *Soldier of Fortune* will be the turning point.

▼ *Trolling around the village.*





▲ *Clamber up the rope.*



▲ *Hostile creatures abound.*

Written by John Cumming, it's not what you'd expect from Graftgold at all. It's a fantasy arcade adventure rather than a space extravaganza, and it certainly doesn't set any new standards in either originality or programming excellence.

You'll want to know the plot, although frankly it's the normal sword-and-sorcery tosh. Evil mage Krillys has unleased a horde of demons on the world by damaging the Zodiac Power Source. Your task, as either Tartarus or Teron (or both in the two-player version) is to find the Source, return it to its rightful place and save a whole forest full of grateful pixies.

Tartarus and Teron can walk, run, jump, climb and open doors, all under joystick control. In two player mode, the game "camera" attempts to follow whichever player pressed his fire button first, so it's in your interest to stick together. If the other player disappears off the screen, he will lose energy swiftly. The Commodore version has very poor background graphics of trees, platforms, ladders and walkways. The monster sprites dance around smoothly while the screen scrolls around, but the design is so poor that you can't make out what most of them are supposed to be – bats, wolves, whatever. In fact, the whole production looks like a second-rate version of Ghosts and Goblins, with only the excellent theme music and spot effects feeling more up-to-date. In contrast, the Spectrum version looks completely different, with larger, more interesting sprite designs, nicely detailed status indicators and decorative screen borders. They're like two completely different games, and the Spectrum version is immensely superior.

What they have in common is the basic plot. In order to complete your quest you have to collect magical tokens, find your way through mystic transporters, and obtain new weapons to protect you against ever more fiercesome enemies. In the Commodore version, you can enter shops in villages and, if you have found golden tokens, trade with the villagers for extra weapons, shields, keys and scrolls. The trading sequence is graphically uninteresting and doesn't add much to the game, so it's no loss that the Spectrum version doesn't have one; here, it's just a matter of finding tokens hidden on the bodies of dead adventurers, and collecting enough to earn you the protection of a guardian spirit as you fight against the final monster on each level.

The Commodore 64 version, then, is a dead standard, pretty boring pot boiler which does little to add to Graftgold's reputation. The Spectrum version, in contrast, is interesting and imaginative, featuring touches like flying platforms, giant monsters and imaginatively designed sprites which make it more than your run-of-the mill pixle shoot-'em up.

	C64	SPEC
► GRAPHICS	5	7
► SOUND	7	5
► GAMEPLAY	7	8
► VALUE	5	7
► OVERALL	65%	81%

UPDATE . . .

Soldier of Fortune is due for release on the Commodore 64 and Spectrum on October 19th. There are no other versions planned.

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C + VG's role-playing expert, Wayne, dons some protective clothing and enters the Bloodbowl, then travels to the post-holocaust world of Twilight: 2000 to mount a last-ditch NATO assault on Poland. There's also the usual stack of FRP mail. When are you going to write in?

FANtASy

Bloodbowl

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► **REVIEWER: WAYNE.**

Bloodbowl is a form of American football played by real mean sword and sorcery dudes like orcs, trolls, goblins, dwarves and, of course, humans.

The aim of the game isn't winning. It is to maim and injure as many opponents as possible, whilst playing with a flair and style that dazzles the crowd. The game is played on a pitch that measures 100 by 60 paces with a further 10 paces at each end zone. The team comprise a large number of players, but only 11 are allowed on the pitch at any one time. They are split into four groups of players – Blitzers, Blockers, Catchers and Throwers. If you are familiar with American football, or are even a fan, the game should be easy for you to play, as you will be fluent with the jargon used. However, if you are a novice, it is all explained in the 40 page Bloodbowl Handbook.

Here you will find out how the game evolved, how the game is played, how it works, what the referees are like, the equipment used as well as a list of teams that all provide you with the flavour of the game and inspiration.

The nitty gritty of *Bloodbowl* is found in the 24 four page rulebook. This covers every aspect of the game such as setting up the game, the sequence of play, movement, passing, blocking and so on. There are pages of examples, which lead you, play by play, through a typical game in action. Once you have mastered the basic rules, you can move on to the Veterans Rules, which cater for advanced play. Again, these are well set out and easy to follow. There are also details of special teams, where the veterans rules apply.

The game components are quite impressive. Along with the aforementioned books, you get two teams of 16 players, which are ready and waiting to be painted, a large three part pitch, which is made out of detailed stone grey, "reinforced" polystyrene, a pass measuring device, a direction finder plus dice and various other colourful accessories, including dice and end zone markers.

Bloodbowl is not a new game. It was originally marketed in 1986 and consisted of a four piece jigsaw board (spit!) plus rulebook. At that time it sold for £12.95. Now GW has revamped it, made it more colourful and upped the price to nearly £20.00.

I would have considered the game value for money, if it delivered the action and excitement that it promised. But it does not. The action is slow and dreary. Sure, you get to stun and kill players and larger team members can throw their smaller colleagues WITH the ball, however, it just doesn't deliver the violent chaos it promises. Jervis Johnson, the designer, has had a great idea here. However, what the game needed was a fast, fluid, freewheeling rules system, which was simple and speedy. As it stands, *Bloodbowl* allows you to play a few slow, tedious games instead of many that are swift and speedy. Just one game of *Bloodbowl* would take you more than an hour if you stuck by the rules.

Of course, if you really appreciate the game, you will have hours of fun ahead of you. *Bloodbowl* contains all you need and more to run a series of games that will last you a long time. There is, of course, the all too familiar expansion kits, which will enable you to buy more teams, extra rules and even cheer leaders!!

There are various ways to end *Bloodbowl*. The most common way is to limit it to a



▲ *Bloodbowl – a rip roaring game with lots of bits.*



▲ *Yankee football comes to life as fanty*

y ROLE PLAYING

set number of touchdowns, which I would advise to be three at the maximum. However, if you are really keen, you could play it for ninety minutes (real time) and the person with the highest score at the end is the winner. If you do this, be sure to put a time limit on each player's turn to stop time wasting. I agree with GW here and suggest five minutes per player.

Where I can't fault GW is in the production. The artwork is excellent, the figures are well detailed and well moulded in sturdy plastic, all the accessories do their relevant jobs perfectly and the board is well designed. The box is one of the best I have ever seen. Furthermore, the written background to the game, the fax and the commentators reports are all exceptionally witty.

However, despite all this, my initial criticisms still stand. With *Bloodbowl* carrying a price tag of £20.00 and only catering for two players, I can only recommend it to hard core American football fans or people who think they would like the cross over between sport and swordplay.

- ► PLAYABILITY 5
- ► COMPLEXITY 5
- ► DESIGN 6
- ► PRESENTATION 9
- ► VALUE 6



as fantasy RPG.

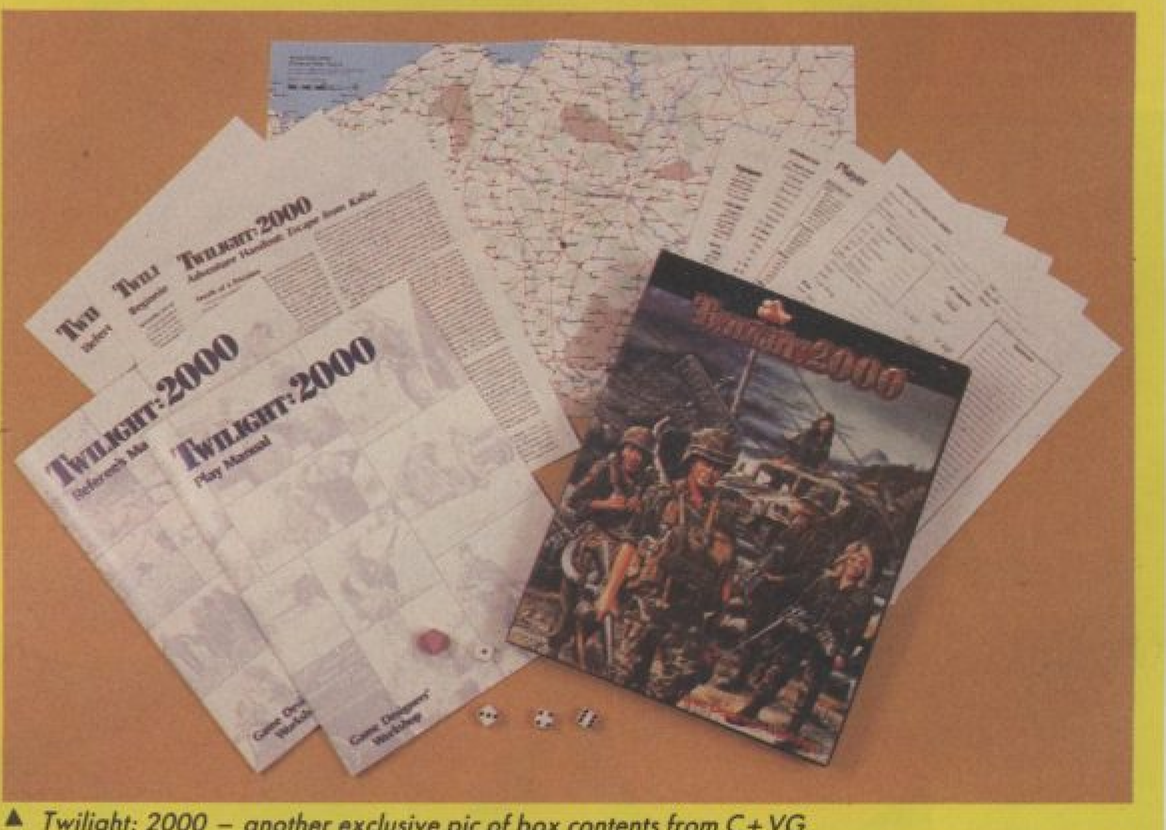
Twilight: 2000

► **PRODUCT: TWILIGHT: 2000.**
► **SUPPLIER: GAMES OF LIVERPOOL.**
► **DESIGNER: FRANK CHADWICK.**
► **PRICE: £11.95.**
► **REVIEWER: WAYNE.**
► **COMPLEXITY: EXPERIENCED PLAYERS.**

Twilight: 2000 is a complete role claim outright victory. The war went on . . .

After the bombs dropped the war changed. Tanks broke down and couldn't be repaired because of the lack of spare parts. Most of the technical weapons fired all of their ammo, and, as no one was making any more, armies that warlords, private armies, and murderous bands of deserters roam the countryside. This game is all about survival and your capacity to ensure it!!

The technical problems are immense. There is no gasoline, modern equipment is almost non existent and ammo is hard to come by. You are in a very



▲ *Twilight: 2000 – another exclusive pic of box contents from C+VG.*

playing system for a Role Playing Game that is set on earth in the year 2,000 after a nuclear war has taken place. The players play the part of soldiers, left to fend for themselves as the organisational structure and communications of the army are all but broken down.

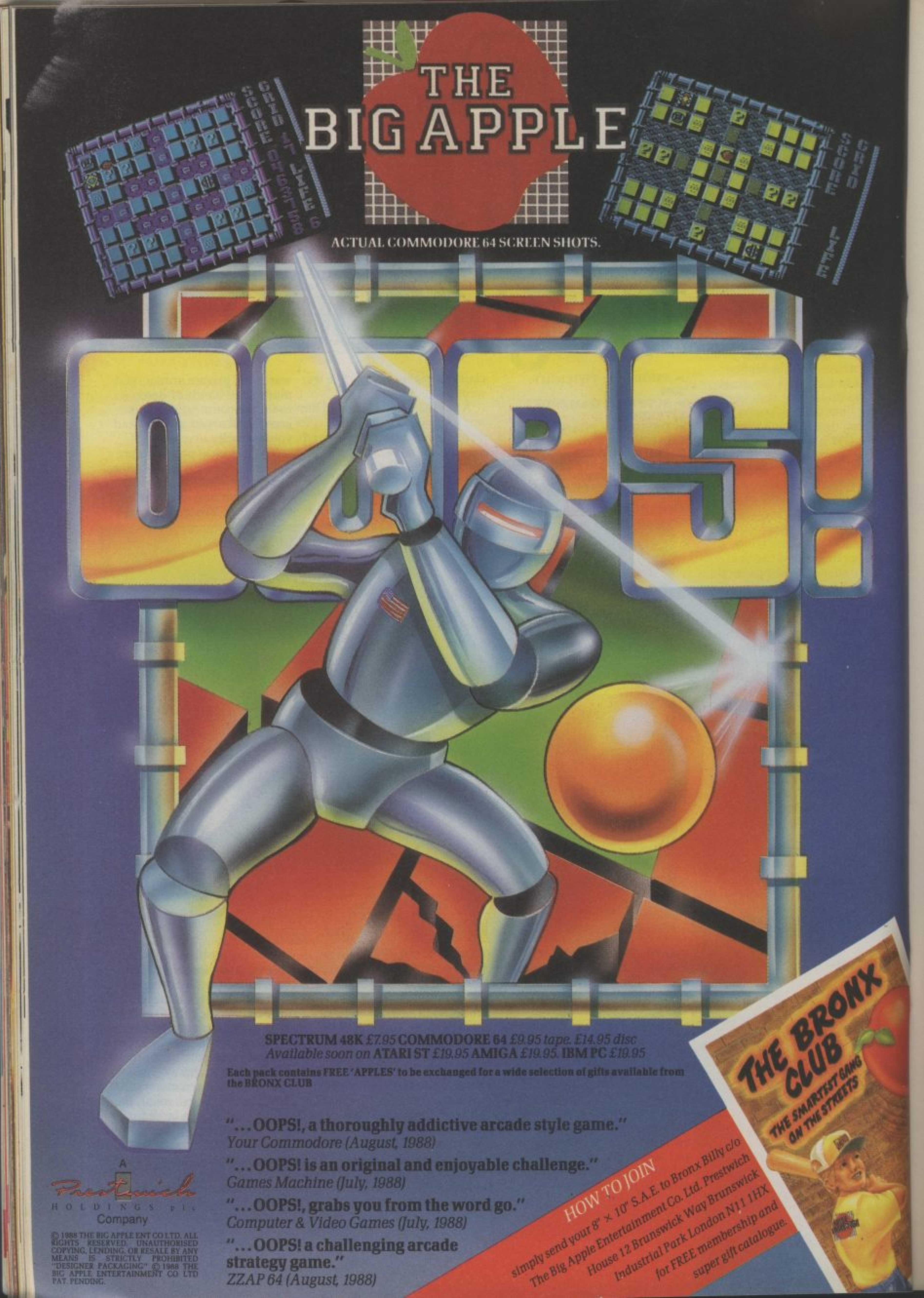
Since 1995 the armies of the world were involved in an all out war. Around 1998 the nuclear bombs began to land and although every country suffered a great deal of damage, no country could at one time put 20,000 people into the field were lucky to put 2,000.

Despite all this the war continues. The players characters are allied to NATO's forces and in this game your mission is to make a last drive into central Poland to see what breakthroughs you can make.

You will soon find out however that the war is the least of your problems. The warring factions are not particularly powerful and the real hazards come from local frustrating position as you have the knowledge and, in some cases, the blueprints or supportive written material, however you lack the essential items to make anything useful.

The product comes in a very colourful and well illustrated A4 box. It contains a large selection of written material, including the play manual, the referee's manual, a large list of charts which include the equipment available to players and the cost a introductory adventure called "Escape

continued on page 77 ►


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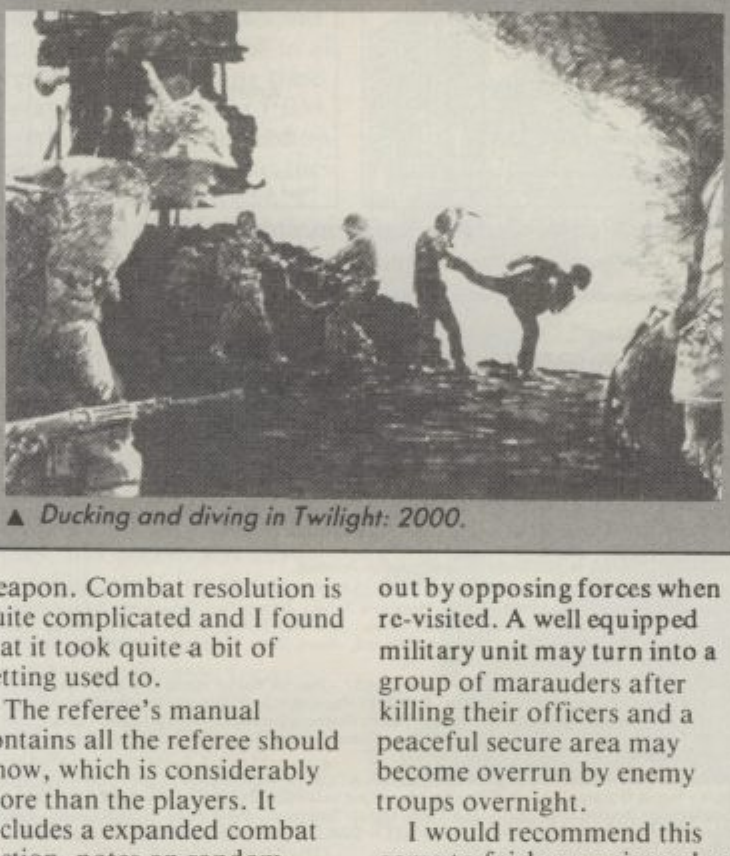
From Kallisz'', record sheets, a large full colour map of Poland, circa 2000AD, plus four six-sided dice and one ten sider.

The play manual should be read first by both the players and the referee. This introduces them both to the game with a fragmented background of the war, then continues to explain Character Generation, which is fairly simple, time and travel, upkeeping of records plus Combat. The combat system is very realistic and covers all aspects of warfare from hand to hand fighting to combat by weapon. Combat resolution is quite complicated and I found that it took quite a bit of getting used to.

The referee's manual contains all the referee should know, which is considerably more than the players. It includes a expanded combat section, notes on random encounters and an additional rules system. These consist of rules that cover such topics as radiation (nasty!), disease, trade and commerce, line of fire and repairs.

Twilight: 2000 is an enjoyable if sometimes complex game. You can see if you have the wits, endurance, courage and skill to survive. Furthermore, a A friendly village encountered two months ago may be wiped out by opposing forces when re-visited. A well equipped military unit may turn into a character must learn to adapt to certain given circumstances if they are to last one day in this game. All those loyal gun-ho, John Wayne types won't last five minutes in this game!

The main thing to bear in mind is that *Twilight: 2000* is all about change, and this is what sets it apart from most other role playing games. The world here is going through constant change, adapting and adjusting to the effects of the holocaust and the war. Most role playing games are set in fairly stable environments, however in this game things rarely stay unchanged for long. A friendly village encountered two months ago may be wiped out by opposing forces when re-visited. A well equipped military unit may turn into a group of marauders after killing their officers and a peaceful secure area may become overrun by enemy troups overnight.



▲ *Ducking and diving in Twilight: 2000.*

I would recommend this game to fairly experienced role players, who are fed up with sword and sorcery campaigns and are looking for a new outlet for their underworked imaginations. Players new to role playing would find this a particularly daunting task and I would advise them to try something simpler.

Twilight 2000 is challenging and different.

- ► COMPLEXITY 9
- ► PLAYABILITY 8
- ► PRESENTATION 8
- ► VALUE 8
- ► OVERALL 8

Letters

''A friend of mine told me that lead miniatures are essential when you buy an FRP. Are they? I hope not because I can't paint an Orc's nostrils.

Also I can't seem to find Dragon Roar in stock anywhere, so if you are selling it, I'll buy it from you. By the way, keep up the great work on the FRP pages!''

Mark Storey,
Sheffield.

Thanks for your support Mark. In answer to your questions, lead miniatures are not essential to RPGs but they certainly help!! In sword and sorcery games, miniatures give you a feel to the game and help the poor old GM keep track of where the player characters were. However, if you were to play a game with more humour like Paranoia or Toon, then you wouldn't need them at all, as fun and frolics are what those two games are all about. Miniatures are only necessary if the FRP you're playing demands it.

The Dragonroar problem is a common one, as I have several letters concerning it. The best bet is to write to Standard Games.

''I live in Holland and I find it it very difficult to buy FRP material anywhere. Could you let me know a local hobby shop or can you recommend a reliable British company which will export the various FRP goodies to me?''

Michael Van Lam,
A frustrated Dutch role player.

This is typical of many letters that I receive from people all over the world. To solve this problem, I have prepared a standard list which gives full details of any overseas FRP shops that I know, plus reliable British companies who export FRP goods. It is ideal for foreign players, but it will also be helpful to potential UK players. All you have to do is send me a s.a.e. and I will forward the list to you pronto!

''I really want to go Live Role Playing, but I live in the North of England and all the LRP societies seem to be run in the south!! Is there anywhere I can go, which is not too far away, so I can participate in this intriguing hobby?''

Rico Gusman,
Chester.

Well Rico, get that rubber sword ready!! ''Spirit Of Adventure'' is an LRP society that is based at: 1 Scarsbrick Rd, Burnage, Manchester, M19 2BT.

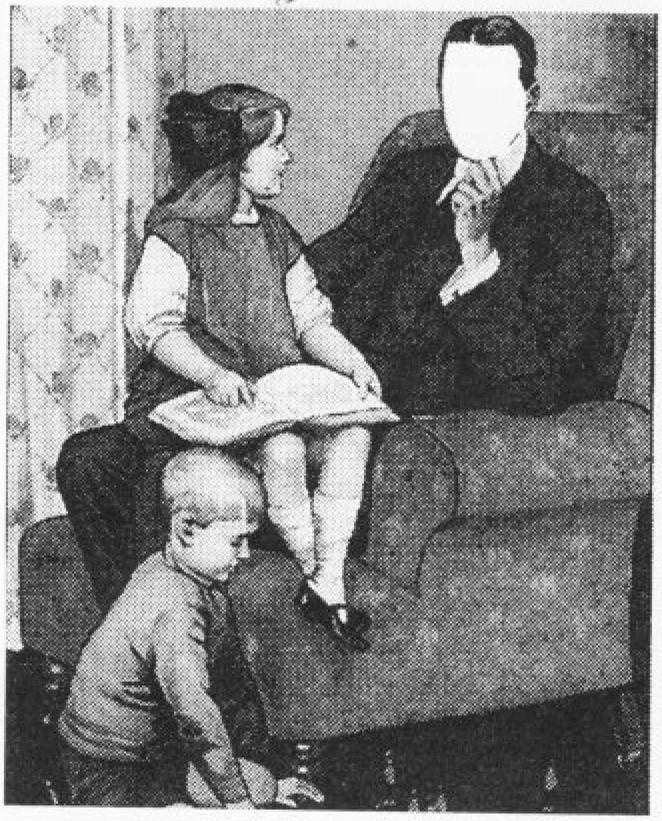
My spies report that it is well worth a look. They have various overground locations and one or two enclosed ''cavern'' adventure sights. You should contact Pam Turnball at the above address or give her a ring after 6pm on 061 2248801. Happy adventuring.

''I am an avid computer role player and have an Amiga. I have completed such games as ''The Bard's Tale'', ''Ultima'' (several versions) and ''The Ancient Art Of War'', but I can't find any more. Please recommend a few more for me and let me know when the Amiga Version of ''Dungeonmaster'' is coming out as I'm desperate for it!!

Paul Watson,
Middx.

The Amiga version of ''Dungeonmaster'' should soon be on sale. If for some reason it is not out, I would suggest getting hold of ''Legend Of The Sword'', which is very entertaining. Furthermore, work is commencing on the Amiga version of AD + D, which, as reviewed in C + VG last month, is brilliant!! However, if you have Dungeonmaster by now, that will keep you occupied for a couple of months!!

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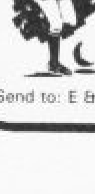
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Play By Mail

Once again Wayne, the man whose mysterious missing last name is the talk of PBM-dom, returns to the fold to "rap" on the subjects Epic III, Eclipse and the all important postal strike . . .

Whether or not you are for the postal strike or against it, one thing is for certain: it has drastically affected the Play By Mail hobby. Many *C + VG* readers are actively involved in PBM so we asked Wayne to contact the major PBM companies to check out what is happening and how they are coping. Here is his special report.

No PBM'er, be it company or player, likes a postal strike. It is the one thing that throws the whole hobby into utter chaos and confusion. As I write a settlement has supposedly been ironed out, but it still seems very dubious whether the whole matter has been totally resolved. All in all it is going to be a testing time for many of the smaller PBM companies, as they depend on the regular cash flow that their game generates to survive. I would not be surprised to find that after the strike a couple of the smaller companies have folded.

The larger PBM companies have the experience and the financial resources to weather the strike, but even they will find life difficult the longer the strike continues.

Kevin Cropper, boss of KJC Games, has had to pay off most of his staff for the duration of the strike, as they have processed all the computer moderated turns available and have no more work to do. A skeleton staff have been retained to process any turns that are telephoned in and to program KJC's new projects. They can't even post out the backlog of turns that they have dealt with as the post boxes are sealed. Basically, because all of their games are computer moderated, they have come to a virtual standstill. However, they are ready to resume work at a moment's notice.

Sloth Enterprises' Simon Letts has confirmed that they too have also dealt with any backlog of turns they may have had. They have retained all their staff and are busily engaged in newsletters, game history, special encounters, game generation and the conversion of various games to computer whilst they wait for the end to the dispute.

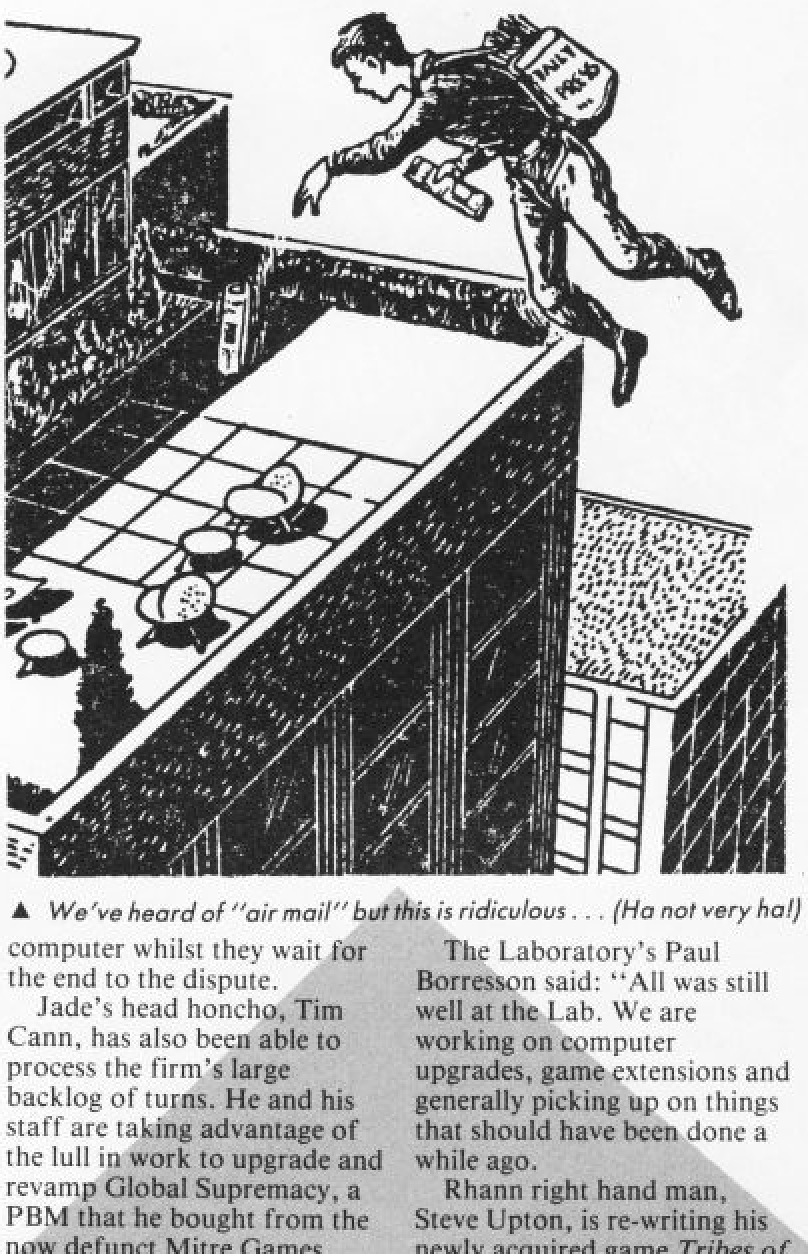
Jade's head honcho, Tim Cann, has also been able to process the firm's large backlog of turns. He and his staff are taking advantage of the lull in work to upgrade and revamp Global Supremacy, a PBM that he bought from the now defunct Mitre Games.

Standard's Dave Norton couldn't be contacted, but his secretary confirmed that no turns were going either in or out of Standard's buildings and Dave himself was off else where conducting very secret talks about obtaining a new PBM.

The Laboratory's Paul Borresson said: "All was still well at the Lab. We are working on computer upgrades, game extensions and generally picking up on things that should have been done a while ago.

Rhann right hand man, Steve Upton, is re-writing his newly acquired game *Tribes of Crane,* another ex Mitre game, and generally "doing things he should have already done."

That's how things stand with the major companies at the moment. If there are any radical changes, you'll read about it first in C + VG — strike or no strike!!



▲ *We've heard of "air mail" but this is ridiculous . . . (Ha not very ha!)*

RHANN GAMES

About 8 months ago I arranged for a playtest of all *Rhann Games'* products. This playtest was carried out by a small handpicked group of C + VG readers which has been reporting to me on a regular basis. Here is the group's verdict.

Rhann's major game is *Epic III – The Kings Game.* It is a totally computer moderated, open ended, sword and sorcery game, where progress is made by strategic play. A player who is good at the diplomatic side of PBM will do well here. The game is of average complexity initially, but progresses into a more complicated mode as the game advances. The turn fee is £2.00 for basic turns and it can increase depending on the size of your kingdom.

When you start off, you have to choose a leader for your small army. This leader can be one of six character types. Warlord, Necromancer, Wizard, Arch Priest, Merchant Prince and Nomad Clan Chief. All have different, but balanced, statistics. You then have to make several choices including the selection of your homeland and the election of secondary leaders. Once this is done, it is up to you to conquer the world, using your leader's abilities.

The game has many aspects, some of which are discovered as you go along. There are your personal henchmen, who are used for spying and assassination, magic items and artifacts that can be either a blessing or a curse to your forces, and troops who will obey your every command — if you have kept their moral high enough!

Rhann have worked hard on this game since they obtained it from Australia and they have added some nice little touches. All battle reports are free, as are henchmen and wizard reports. All orders, over 80 of them, are impartially resolved

Play By Mail

by the computer and there are both land and sea combat options. Furthermore, company director Steve Upton is only too pleased to help players who have problems in completing, or understanding their turns. I must admit that their personal touch really impressed me.

The game certainly impressed C + VG playtesters Steve Smith (Oldham) and Sinclair Scott (Holland). Steve called *Epic* "The best computer moderated PBM I have ever played", and Sinclair said: "I can heartily recommend the game to any prospective empire builders, since it is not simply a game, but a real power struggle."

Overall, the playtesters really enjoyed *Epic* and the above two comments are representative of the general opinion. In fact I did not receive one bad report about it from over 20 playtesters.

Eclipse is by Rhann. I had a whole game set up for C + VG readers, which meant that 20 people could play for nought. The players found that *Eclipse* is a game of space exploration and conquest, which is based around a star system that compromises of anything between 180 to 220 stars. The aim is to conquer two thirds of the system either on your own or with an alliance consisting of several players.

Once again the game is completely computer moderated, but this time it has fixed deadlines. This means that you have to get your turn details to Rhann by a certain date or your organisation will suffer the consequences. Before you begin, you must choose one of six races: Human, Laaran, Casark, Wevan, Sagori or Ariane. Each has differing characteristics, but as in *Epic* they are balanced out so there is no one real advantage.

The rulebook is fairly complex, and involves a bit of number crunching, but you soon get used to it after a few reads. Everything is covered from space fleets and armies to computer controlled forces. Filling the turn sheet in is a simple affair, with the turn price depending on the number of actions performed.

The playtesters thought that the game was OK, but suffered as a result of a few annoying quirks. Nigel Parsons, Cardiff, found that "some of my orders were incorrectly imputted and this ruined some of my turns" and Kes Savage (Southampton) said that "the printer ribbon jumped sections at the end of the page, printing things where they shouldn't have been." However, Kes went on to say that if "Rhann could get their act together, the game prospects look excellent overall."

I have always found Rhann ready to listen, and as we speak they are overhauling *Eclipse,* so that it will be a quicker, more detailed game. Who says nobody listens to playtesters?

If anyone is interested in playing any of the above games, I have once again managed to obtain some special discounts for C + VG readers. A start up in *Epic* usually costs £5.00, but C + VG readers can join for £2.50 and get two free turns. Turning to *Eclipse* now. If anyone is interested in being amongst the first players in the re-launch, all you have to do is send £1.00 to cover P + P and you will get a free rule book, start up in the new game and a free turn. All cheques should be made to payable to Rhann Games and sent via me at C + VG with proof of purchase.



▲ *"Down, Shep!"*

Rhann has now obtained the rights to run the old Midgard game, *Tribes Of Crane.* They have changed slightly by bringing the history forward 300 years and moving the technology back 300 years meaning that there is a 600 year technology gap. You play the game as a tribe that wanders a strange planet, aiming to survive and grow more influential. Rhann have computerized the record keeping side of the game, but have decided to keep the hand operated part of the game.

Furthermore, any player that joins the game will not be disadvantaged by being issued with a small tribe. Rhann propose to take a mean average of all the tribes in the game and issue new players with tribes the size and strength of that figure.

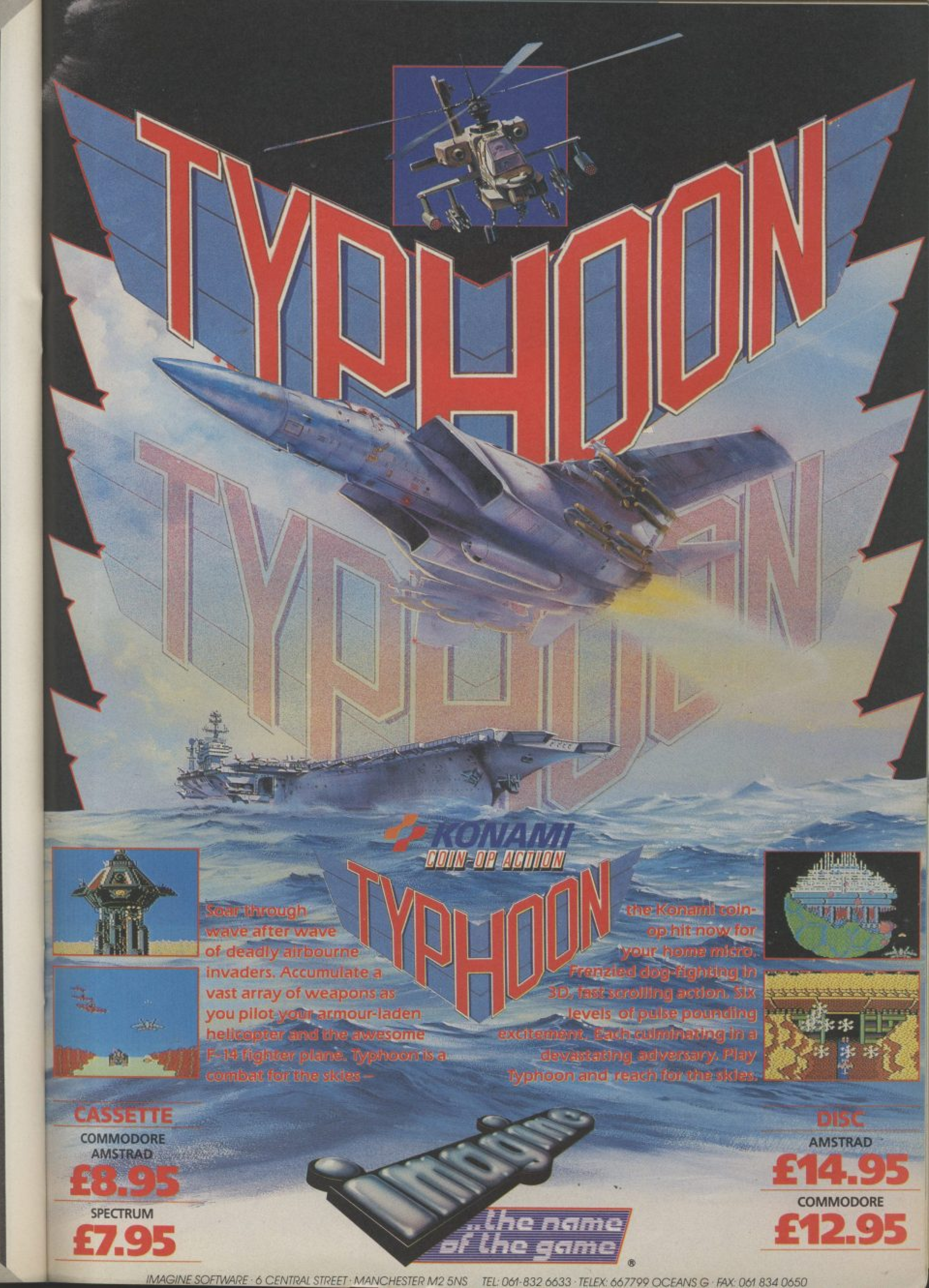
Merlins Kingdom has come up with a new concept in PBM. It has started a horror/detective game, set around a mythos similar to the cult Role Playing Game "Call Of Cthulhu". They claim to have combined "serious roleplaying with some humorous aspects," which could make it very entertaining. Players can encounter any aspect of the unknown from magicians to spiders and vampires and voodoo. Players may choose up to four character types to help them in their adventures. They build up their characters skill as they progress and their object is to become "Master Of Fear." There is a large problem solving element to the game and it will appeal to people who enjoy a "thinking" game rather than a "combat" game.

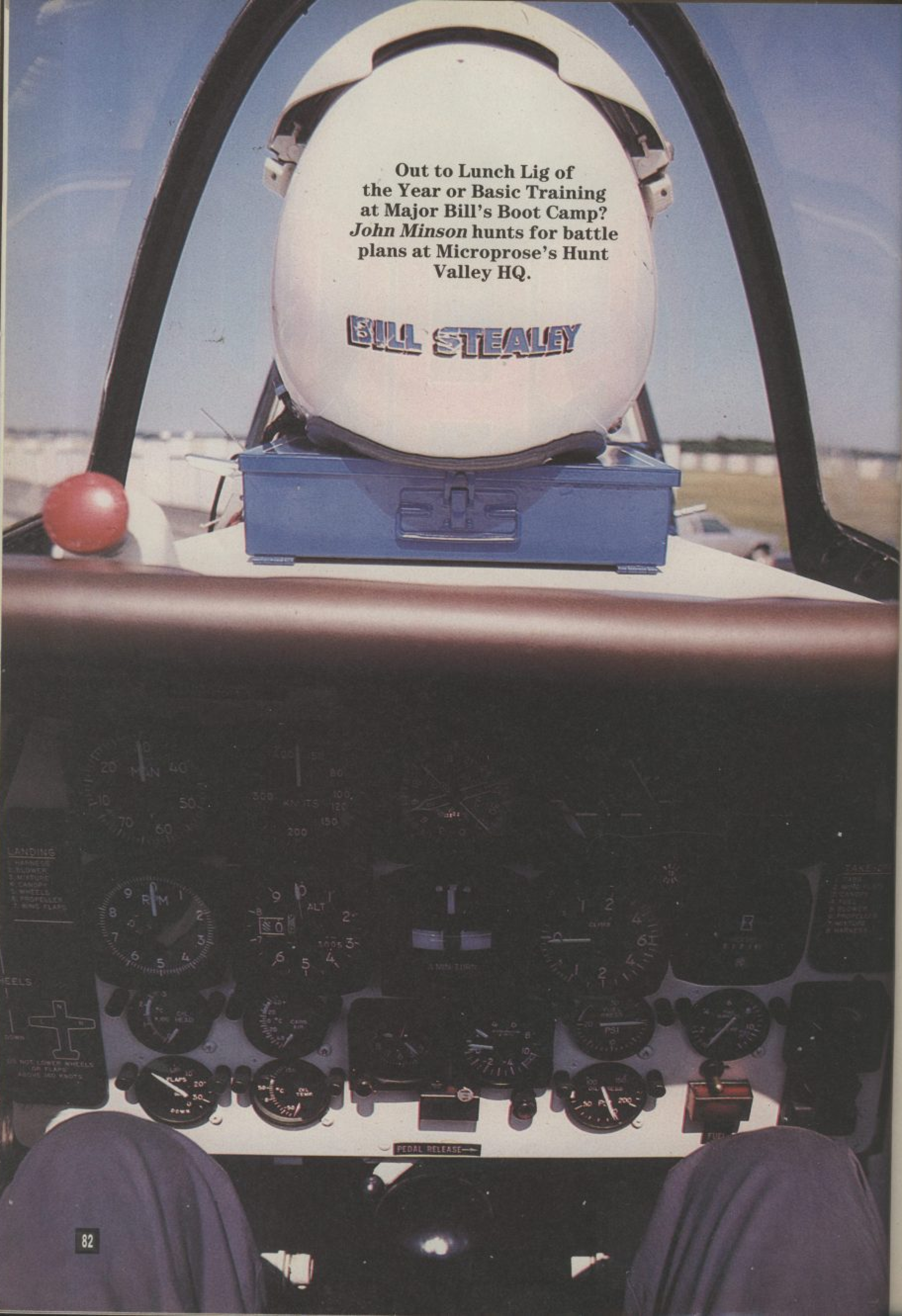
Start up and rulebook costs £5.00, whilst turns cost £1.50 each. All cheques, P/O's should be made payable to Merlins Kingdom and sent via C + VG with proof of purchase.

What with the football season just starting (as I write), it should be topical to mention GAD Games, *Soccer Supremo s.* This is a game where you play the part of a manager of a ficticious football team in one of two different leagues, which consist of international club teams.

You have to ensure all the ups and downs of football including transfers, team formations, tactics, sponsorship deals, coaching, youth team players, physiotherapists and trainers. International country fixtures also feature.

So, if there are any budding Tony Cottees out there, all you have to do is send me an s.a.e. and I will arrange for a free rulebook to be sent to you with GAD's compliments.


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Out to Lunch Lig of the Year or Basic Training at Major Bill's Boot Camp? *John Minson* hunts for battle plans at Microprose's Hunt Valley HQ.

MISSION MICROPROSE

Baltimore, home of the Orioles baseball team, edible crabs – and Microprose software. The Orioles and crabs are added attractions, but I'm here to infiltrate the simulation specialists' offices, train in the basics of modern warfare with their high profile chief, Major 'Wild Bill' Stealey . . . and hopefully return alive.

ROLL CALL Monday 22/8/88 – 08.30 hours

The day starts early at Microprose. In the lunchroom everybody gathers for the Monday meeting. The atmosphere is lighthearted as the Major runs through introductions of new employees, reports from the heads of departments, and notes that the company has leaked a dealer demo disk to software pirates, obtaining free mass distribution.

"Is there anything else anybody wants to share with the group?" Bill asks. There's not, so we set out on a tour of the building.

This is a low security area, but: "Make sure you wear your badge at all times when you're in the areas with blue carpet," Bill warns. "That's where development takes place." Here are the programmers' offices, each adorned with personal decorations. More seriously there are large scale maps and posters of military badges – everything to ensure the legendary Micrprose accuracy.

This is also where Sid Meier, co-founder of the company has his office. Its window is filled with toy dinosaurs. Apparently Sid has a unique method of communicating with Bill; currently he wants the



▲ Ms Microprose prepares for take off.

company to do a game with a prehistoric setting and this is how he makes his point. Bill regrets that Sid isn't around at the moment; "Sid is the creative genius," he says. "I'm just a creative critic."

A little further down the corridor is a Red Barron coin-op machine. Bill and Sid first met when they played the game in Las Vegas in May '82. Sid won and flushed with victory boasted that he could write a better game within a week. "Then I can sell it," Bill replied. It was actually August before Sid presented *Hellcat Ace* to Bill – and Bill realised he'd have to form a software company!

Bill started packing disks and manuals into plastic bags in his kitchen in October 1982. In 1990 he hopes the company will make $100 million. But the vital force behind Microprose remains Sid and Bill's love for simulations.

▼ Patriotic Bill . . .

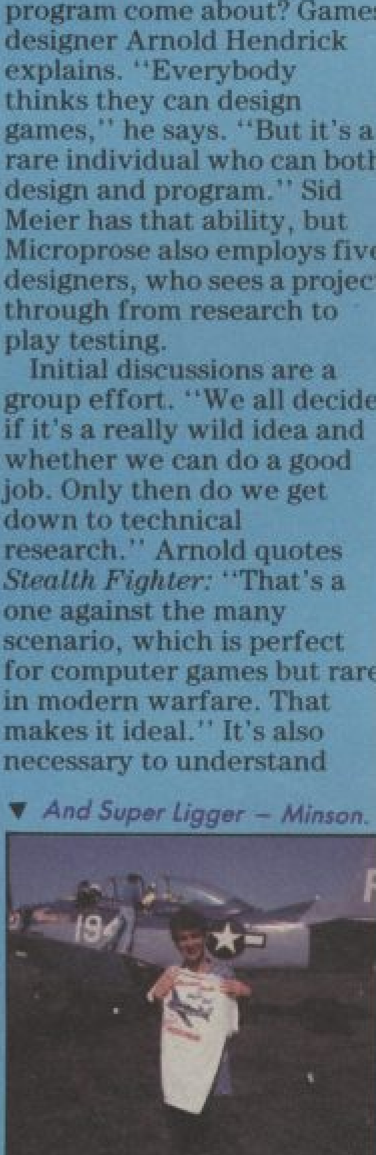


BATTLE PLANS 10.40 hours

So how does a Microprose program come about? Games designer Arnold Hendrick explains. "Everybody thinks they can design games," he says. "But it's a rare individual who can both design and program." Sid Meier has that ability, but Microprose also employs five designers, who sees a project through from research to play testing.

Initial discussions are a group effort. "We all decide if it's a really wild idea and whether we can do a good job. Only then do we get down to technical research." Arnold quotes *Stealth Fighter:* "That's a one against the many scenario, which is perfect for computer games but rare in modern warfare. That makes it ideal." It's also necessary to understand

▼ And Super Ligger – Minson.



micro limitations, because as Arnold observes, "We're more limited by hardware than our programmers' ability." Designers work closely with programmers and graphics artists throughout coding.

Finally comes play testing. One expatriate British programmer told me that in the UK games are lucky if they get half an hour's trial before they're shipped to the duplicators, bugs and all. Compare that with the four and a half months that Kennedy Approach received. This makes it impossible for Microprose to name release dates until the program is complete, but it does mean that they can never be accused of issuing half-finished product.

UNDERCOVER ACTIVITIES 11.30 hours

Airborne Ranger, Microprose's arcade simulation of ground combat behind enemy lines, isn't new to Commodore and Amstrad owners, but there's a Spectrum version on the way, which looks like it's captured the excitement of the original. While it strays from strict simulation, its success means that a sequel is on the cards.

But if you thought creeping around on your belly was secretive, wait till you try sneaking into foreign embassies as one of the 'grey men' of intelligence – the spies who will be disowned by their superiors if they are ever captured. It's called . . . *Covert Action!*

The secret operations scenario was suggested as a follow up to Airborne Ranger, leaving game designer Roy Gibson to read about the topic. He decided





MISSION MICROPROSE

that the real interest was in these men who never win medals – if they're – successful, nobody ever hears about them! Their 'dirty tricks' range from theft and blackmail to recruiting double agents. Only assassination has been left out!

You can choose from the CIA, with lavish resources but inept support; M15 with fair resources but good field craft; or Israel's MOSAD, who are great in the field with resources that border on the primitive. The KGB, inevitably, are the bad guys. Once you have your mission you move around the world, approaching government agencies. In London you can visit M15 – let's hope the map locations aren't accurate or it'll be banned under the Official Secrets Act!

ORIENTAL OPERATIONS 12.05 hours

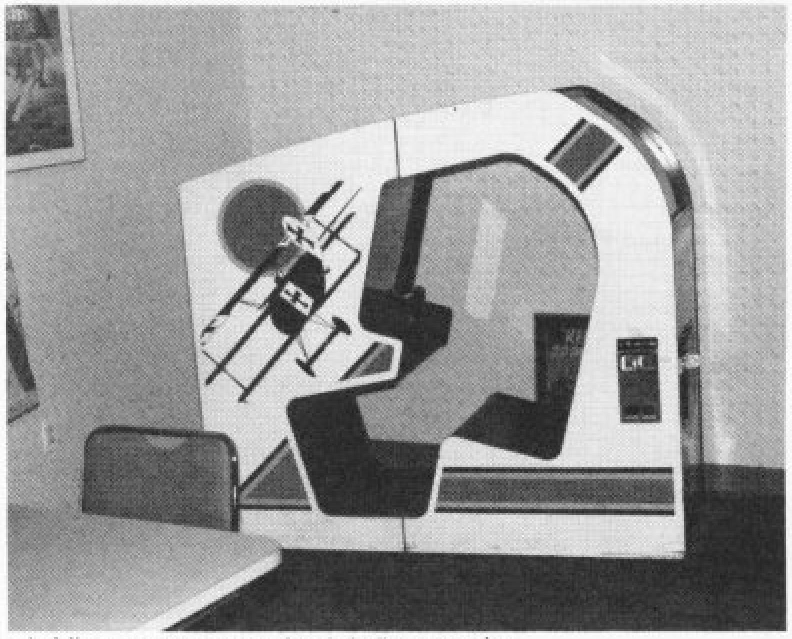
One country not featured in *Covert Action* is Japan – but it has a game of its own. Provisionally titled Samurarai – though this will change – it's the official follow up to *Pirates*, combining role playing with a strong graphics element and simple menu commands. The secret of successful Samurai-ing is to behave honourably, according to the codes of sixteenth century Japan. Be a good guy and you'll overthrow evil warlords in one to one combat – and unlike *Pirates*, where the duelling was seen side on, in a single plane, you'll dodge and weave in full three dimensional glory.

▼ Wild Bill takes to the skies.



Samurai has to be the first role playing game where you establish a dynasty. If you're successful, your children take over the empire that you established.

Microprose is also invading Japan in real life, with the establishment of an oriental office. Not only are they successfully selling Origin's *Ultima* role playing series to the Nintendo market (using two joy cards to make choices) but there's even a demand for WW2 simulations like *Hellcat Ace*, in which the enemy is none other than . . . Japan! Ahh-so!



▲ Microprose are moving into the arcades.

SOFTLY SOFTLY . . . Tuesday 23/8/88 – 10.40 hours

"The theory of stealth fighting has been around for a long time. It's just taken ten years for the Pentagon to devise how to do it." Major Bill Stealey is talking and he should know; as his 'Wild Bill' card proclaims, he's a Chief Advisor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

F-19 Stealth Fighter is a refinement of *Project: Stealth Fighter* for the PC. Bill reckons it's now even more accurate – but isn't that tricky with a plane which doesn't officially exist? Well, the Swedish Air Force has used Microprose's version for its aircraft recognition manual, suggesting they've got something right! This is confirmed by the member of the top brass who told Bill that he's well over ninety percent accurate!

Stealth fighting is the art of sneaking in below enemy radar and avoiding their planes to infiltrate territory and hit crucial targets. It calls for highly specialised equipment – the F-19 – and nifty low-level, 'silent' flying.

HARDWARE WARS 11.15 hours

Compared with Bill's extrovert enthusiasm, Gene Lipkin demonstrates the Californian, laid back attitude to life. He also has what may be the biggest news of the visit – Microprose is getting into coin-op machines!

There couldn't be a better choice than Gene to head the new operation – he was one of the founding fathers to Atari! His team of fifteen are now working flat out to get 3D Technologies, to give Microprose Coin-Op its proper name, first machines ready for the new year.

"Currently video games have 2D comic style graphics," Gene explains. "We're dedicated to polygon graphics, 3D simulation and long play." This means we can expect various missions, just like the home computer versions. But it will all be to a much higher resolution – 60,000 polygons per second instead of the mere 300 that make up an F19 landscape on the PC.

We can also expect the large environmental cabinets that let you really get into the action, and Microprose have had special chips designed. Subject to the Microprose Official Secrets Act, Gene won't say more than, "It's safe to assume that our first release will be a flight game."

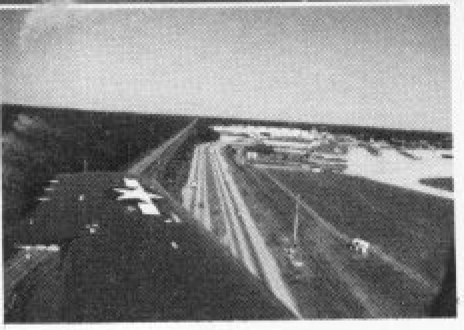
REST AND RECREATION 11.55 hours

It starts to look like Microprose is planning an American invasion but the British strike back when it comes to another new departure – sports simulations. Perhaps down heartened by the Orioles' dismal record in their national sport, the first release is not baseball but . . . soccer!

But this is no ordinary game of footie. *Microprose Soccer* includes everybody's favourite features of the game – such as wind and even rain! And following the inevitable Saturday afternoons downpour the ball plays differently on the wet grass. This is a real

▼ Wild Bill's pride and joy!





MISSION MICROPROSE



simulation and Stewart Bell, Microprose's European MD, jokes that they spent hours consulting atlases to get the geography of the pitches correct!

THIS IS WAR! 14.00 hours

Middle Eastern terrorists have destroyed a crucial Russian oil refinery. A bomb has gone off in the Kremlin. The Americans are blamed though it's actually the work of KGB fanatics who plan to use the uproar to detract from the oil crisis. But they get more than they planned for and suddenly there's a *Red Storm Rising* with World War III blowing up a gale.

Tom Clancy, *Red Storm's* multi-millionaire author, is on chatting terms with the Pentagon chiefs of staff, making him the ideal person to team up with Microprose in a strategy simulation. To demonstrate how this latest blockbuster has become a game, Bill Stealey has forsaken the skies for a submarine, with Tom Clancy in attendance to ensure that the free world is saved from the communist menace!

Stalking convoys in a sub calls for more patience than dogfighting, and almost immediately he's left Holy Loch, Bill wants blood. He sets course for the seas north of Norway on the large scale map, which also indicates satellite patterns and major flash points as the war progresses. Meanwhile Tom sits back, offering expert advice. The guy obviously has an endless wealth of knowledge, not just a military equipment but also the best way to use it.

▼ *It's all up to you!*

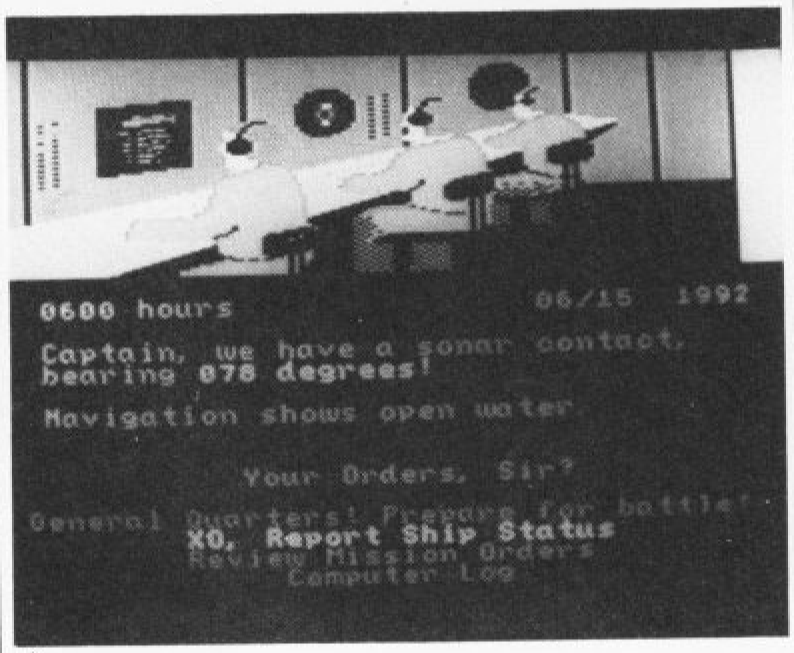


Pretty soon Bill is rewarded as he comes across four Russian ships. "Keep your speed low so that you don't alert them," Tom warns. Bill prepares his torpedoes and cruise missiles – the choice of weaponry is staggering – then launches his attack. Unfortunately his first cruise is intercepted.

"Always fire more than one," Tom advises.

By now the Russians know of Bill's presence and it's time to take evasive action, diving out of the immediate danger zone. There are guided torpedoes on his tail but knowledge of their logic systems allows Bill to turn away from their search pattern and lose them. The battle continues, with Bill taking a hit but destroying four Russian ships before he has to limp back to port. He wants to hang around rather than diving, but Tom suggests that discretion is the better part of valour: "These airforce types are so bloodthirsty," he chuckles.

Back at Holy Loch, Bill is awarded a Bronze Star. More laughter from Tom: "Crap! You get a Bronze Star just for showing up." But Bill's not too downhearted – he stayed up all night to win the war. Even then it took plenty of saves. Be glad it's only a computer game!



▲

CHOCKS AWAY! 15.30 hours

My training is over. I'm now experienced in everything from stealth fighting to submarine battles, not forgetting excursions into espionage and even ancient Japan! There's just one thing left . . . Miss Microprose!

Miss Microprose is Major 'Wild Bill' Stealey's true love. She's his ultimate toy – a 37 year old, T-28 Trojan jet trainer. Sure you can get a buzz from flying simulated dogfights on your micro, but this is the real thing,

Okay, I confess – I'm an orthodox coward. Does Bill really want a chicken in the rear seat? Knowing that the squat little plane's single engine is identical to the ones on a nearby flying boat does little to ground my butterflies. Bill hands me a plastic bag. "I have never made one person ill in my plane," he says. "I do not want to start now."

But here I am, being strapped in to the tiny cockpit, with the same controls you'd find in a jet fighter, listening to warnings not to touch the red lever and not to get my camera caught in the stick. If anything really did go wrong would I be able to bale out and pull the rip cord? Too late – we're taxing to the run way! Take off is smoother than the 1011 that brought us to Baltimore, and we're up and circling round the airfield. "You enjoying yourself, John? comes over my headphones. "Fine . . . err, roger that, Bill," I stutter into the intercome. I'm stoked!

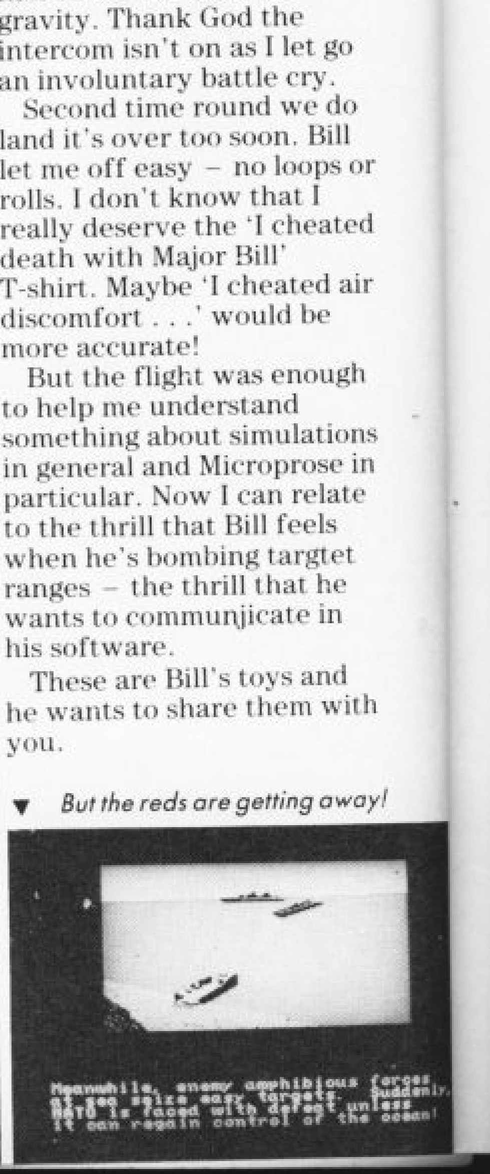
We bank steeply towards the runway and we're coming in to land – then about ten feet above the ground we level out and Bill zooms onwards, waggling the wings from side to side – a stunt guaranteed to induce heart attacks in the tower! Suddenly we're climbing, pulling around two and a half times the force of gravity. Thank God the intercom isn't on as I let go an involuntary battle cry.

Second time round we do land it's over too soon. Bill let me off easy – no loops or rolls. I don't know that I really deserve the 'I cheated death with Major Bill' T-shirt. Maybe 'I cheated air discomfort . . .' would be more accurate!

But the flight was enough to help me understand something about simulations in general and Microprose in particular. Now I can relate to the thrill that Bill feels when he's bombing targtet ranges – the thrill that he wants to communjicate in his software.

These are Bill's toys and he wants to share them with you.

▼ *But the reds are getting away!*



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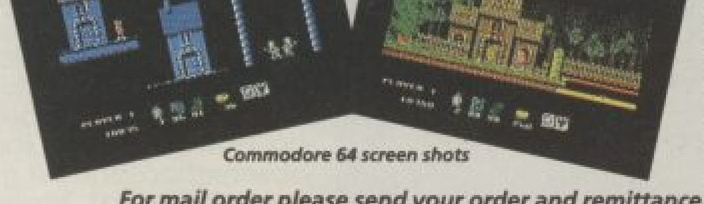
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► REVIEWER: KEITH CAMPBELL.

Village of Little Moaning has come under the Cloud of Jasper Quickbuck's plans to turn into into a vast housing estate for yuppies. Eviction notices have been served on the residents, and demolition teams of trolls are poised to move in.

Ingrid is back, that indefatigable Gnome Ranger and she is unperturbed. In part one of this three-parter, she is getting up a petition against the development. The trouble is the scruffy piece of paper she is carrying, has no names written on it.

Still, not to worry, you are there to help her. So how about popping in for a glass of scrumpy, and collect a few signatures at the Green Gnome? Perhaps the landlord, Jumbo Butterrface, will oblige, and some of his customers too – there's Mrs Underlay, and Silas Crawley having a few for a start.

Along the road at Terry Cottage, Boney Spratt is not having a very good day's fishing.

Somedays he fishes, and somedays he ferrys, but these days he is nearly always fishing, to feed the growing number of customers waiting at the Green Gnome for a ferry. What can be done to cheer him up and persuade him to sign?

Then there's your uncle, Dundee Halfyard, at the Mill. Nice little place, only recently built, and well-sheltered from the wind, it would be such a shame to knock that down for yuppies!

But Dusty is certainly well guarded against intruders. What with a yard full of killer Chickens, and that baracade he's putting up inside the mill . . . collecting signatures for a petition can be very rewarding, but some signatures are worse than useless. In fact they are worth ten negative points, so it pays to examine each prospect, and think a bit before showing the petition.

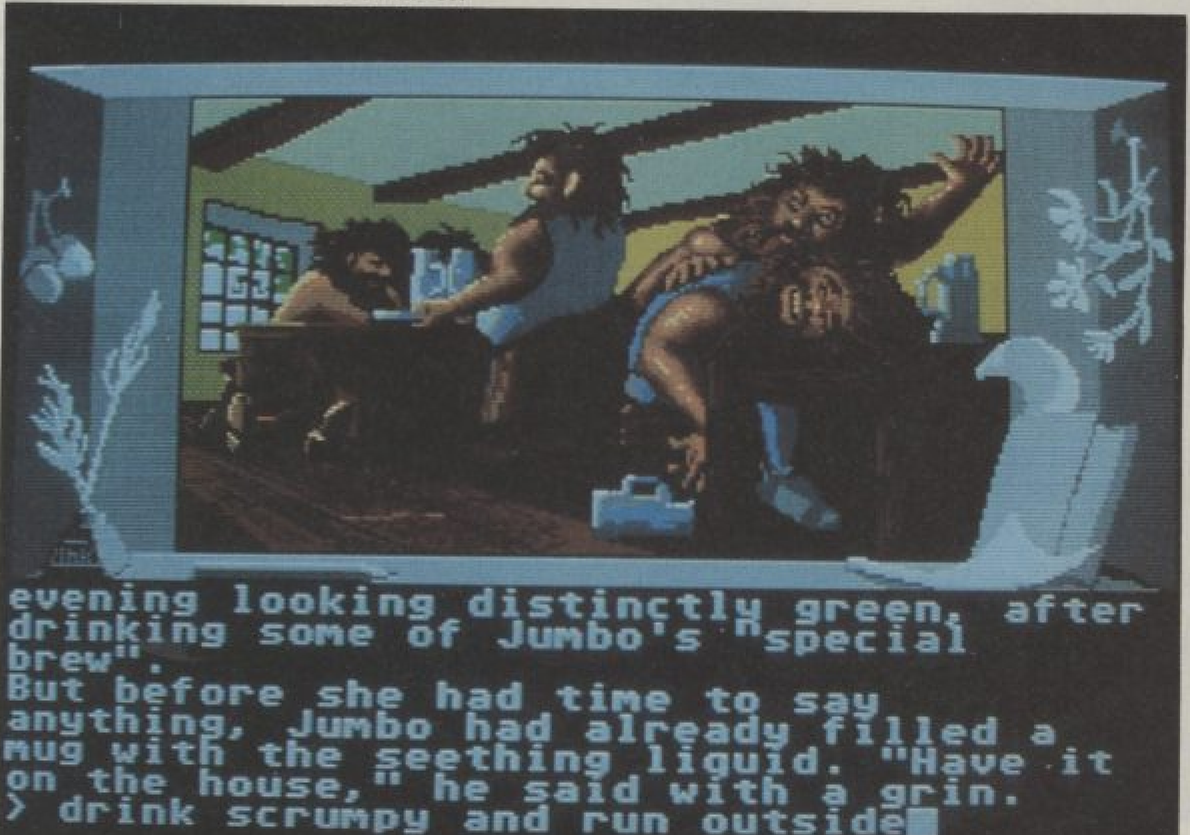
When complete, and with the petition presented, the game moves onto part 2, and you're family home in nearby Gnettlefield. Quickbuck's agent is on the prowl, intent on stealing the deeds to the farm. What's more, a steam roller manned by ugly trolls is heading inexorably up the track, and they cat call and wolf-whistle you as you arrive to investigate. The object of this part is to stop the steam roller and steal the plans.

In part 3, you have obtained a position as maid at the Quickbuck residence and report to the mansion for duty. In reality, with help of your Consim Daisy, you are searching for evidence that will put Quickbuck behind bars for a long time to come!

I have often found difficulty in deciding what to try to do in recent Level 9 adventures, since the plots have been very open, with Ingrid's Back, Pete Austin told me, they have introduced a new policy in adventure design. That is, to make them much easier at the start with a gradual progression to more and more difficult puzzles. In part 1, the player's objective is a treasure hunt in disguise, and the beginner will find no great difficulty in making progress. Not that it is all plain sailing, for there are a couple of quite tricky puzzles that will have the more experienced player scratching his head.

The game becomes much more open in part 3, with the old problem of how to go about things. You will need to get Daisy to help you, you are told. But it is not at all obvious what you should be telling the ever-grinning Daisy to do. However, some sharp observations should give you a few ideas, however false things seem.

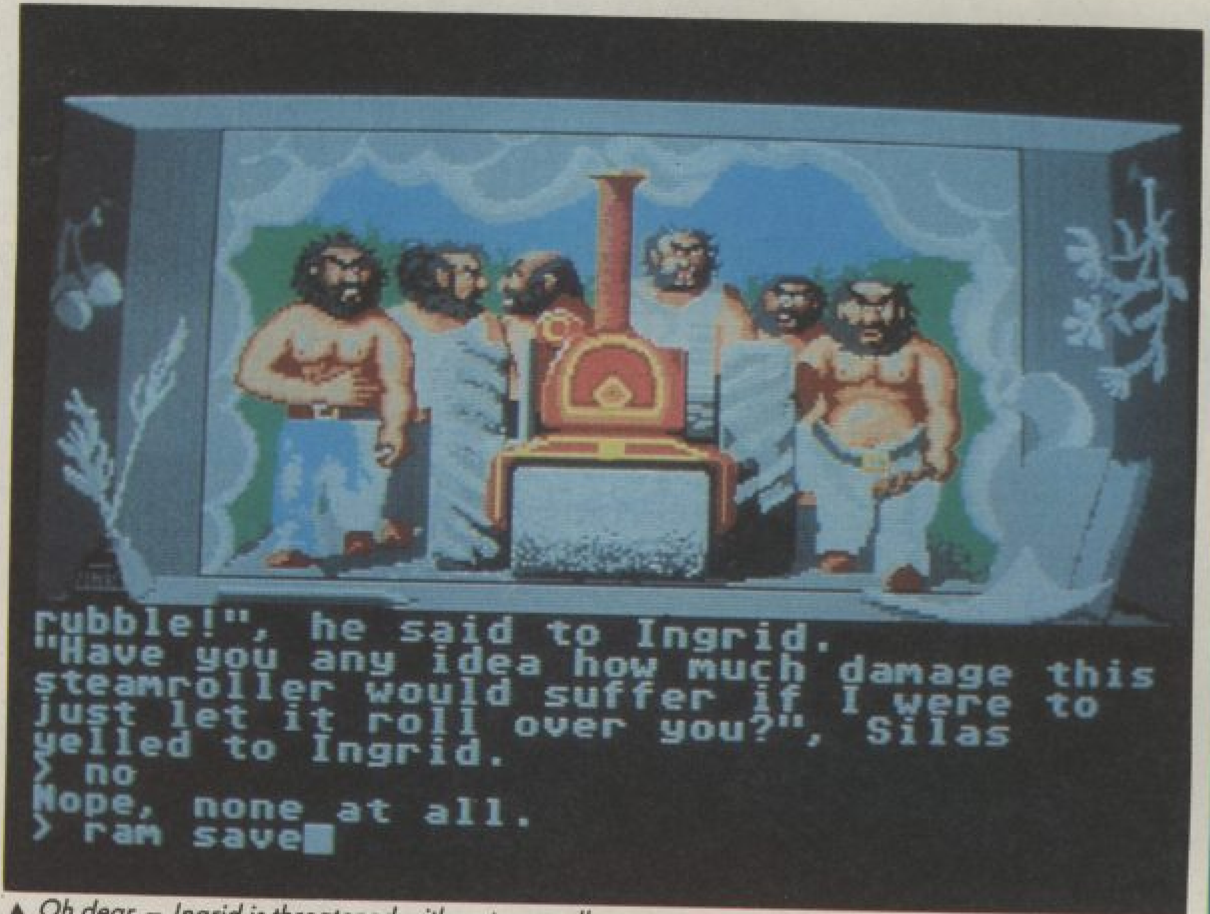
▼ *KC shares a drink with the dwarves.*





▲ *Level 9 show they can out pixel paint*

Back



▲ *Oh dear – Ingrid is threatened with a steam roller.*



paint th est of 'em.

Ingrid's Back comes in a new design of package. Similar in construction to the Infocom Packaging and similar in looks to the artwork of earlier level 9 classics such as Emerald Isles. We see the return of the attractive white-on-black 'L9' motif bordering a full colour picture of Ingrid. Inside, in addition to the appropriate disk or cassette, lies the Second Gnettlefield Journal, a forty page booklet complete with loading and playing instruction as well as some further extracts from Ingrid's diary. Worth a read in it's own right, it can also give you a few ideas about some of the problems in Ingrid without actually giving the game away.

The rustic setting of Ingrid's Back is enhanced with a complete change of graphic design: out are misty digitised pictures of Ghome Ranger and Knight Orc, and in are some wonderful artist drawn pictures. There are fairy tale country cottages, pubs full of drunken gnomes, and idyllic country scenes, that all really add atmosphere to the game. The screen shot shown here comes from the Atari ST version which also supports mono graphics on a high-res monitor.

Note, however, that not all versions have graphics (see above list) and don't expect 8-bit machines to achieve quite the same standard. There are many advanced features built into the Level 9 adventure system, that make the mechanics of playing the game much easier. RAM save is available on all but 48K Spectrum, Amstrad PC, and small BBC's.

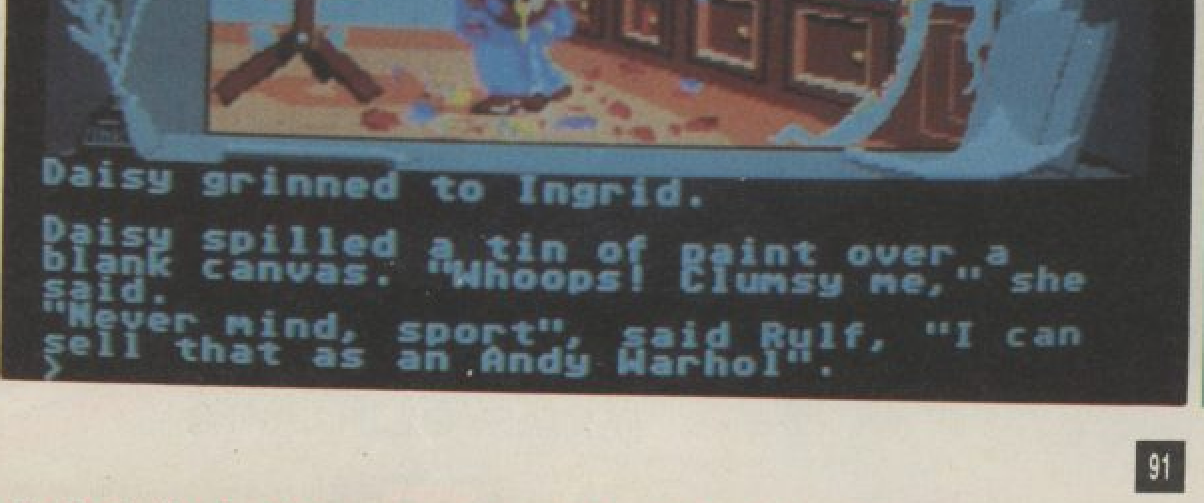
OOPS takes you back one more, and is available on all disk versions, with multiple OOPS on Atari ST. Picture sliding to reveal the text hidden behind it, previous command editing, and picture off to avoid unnecessary disk loads during play, are available on a number of versions.

Ingrid's Back has the funniest humour of any Level 9 game yet! What is Seamus Sosmall doing in Mrs Tackhammer's wardrobe, when you break into her bedroom and find her lying red-faced on the bed? Begorrah, he isn't having trouble with his teleport spell and shouldn't he be somewhere else altogether? As you leave the house together he suddenly remembers he's left his magic wand upstairs, and goes back, insisting that you do not wait for him . . .

Without a doubt, this is the most enjoyable Level 9 adventure I have played to date. Go out and buy a copy!

► VOCABULARY	9
► ATMOSPHERE	9
► PERSONAL	9
► VALUE	9

▼ *What's this – Ingrid think she's Van Gogh.*




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There are still people irretrievably stuck in *Beyond Zork*, and the clues section, with the help of Andrew Bethell, aims to help them back in time for Steve Meretsky's revelations about the history of the Great Underground Empire, in the forthcoming prequel, Zork Zero! But Andrew wants to be there, too! What use is the Queen Platypas's magic mirror, and where should he inscribe the glyph after causing a volcanic eruption?

The *Shadowgate* dialogue continues this month, with Matthew Hill of Brighton, coming up with some more hints, and, would you believe, some more questions? First, though, he has a complaint: "In the September issue you said that my name was *Shadowgate*.

Unfortunately, important though I am, I have not had a game named after me!" Apologies, Matthew, these things do happen from time to time!

"Shadowgate" Hill's tips will be found in the clues section. Meanwhile, he asks: "How do you open the door in the well room? Are the blue hairs growing on my hands significant?" And there's this poor lady chained up in the tower, too. "How do you get the object from her?" asks Alan Wilson of Falkirk, more concerned about himself than the unfortunate woman, "and what do you about the snake statue across the bridge?"

Three questions in a row, and I couldn't answer one of them! They came from Kevin Murphy of Kirkcaldy. He can't kill the pterodactyl in Temple Of Terror, he keeps breaking his leg trying to get into the rift *in Frankenstein*, and he can't get past the guards after rescuing Twoflower in *Colour Of Magic*. Who can hit the jackpot?

Some general help is sought by Paul Whittingham of Wirral. He has only been able to obtain two statements, the ballistics report, and autopsy, in *The Sydney Affair*, and can get no further.

Stephen King of Thurnscoe near Rotherham, is in very big trouble in a *Very Big Cave*, facing a very small tunnel. He can see an emerald at the end of it, but he can't get his lamp through. Can anyone see his way to helping out?

A plea of a difference, now, from a lone adventurer in Yugoslavia. Would anyone like to swap clues and adventure chat with Svetomir Petrovic? He is one of very few adventure fans in Belgrade, and needs someone to write to! His address is: Nika Strugara 10, pr.1, 11 132 Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and he would be delighted to hear from you. He's currently playing *Frankenstein, Wolfman*, and a game called *Black Knight*.

Clues

Help came this month from: Andrew Bethell, Walsall; David Moore, Liverpool; Allen and Mark Errington, Durham; Matthew Hill, Brighton; and Alan Wilson, Falkirk.

BEYOND ZORK:
To pass the Christmas Tree monsters, put the butterfly into the hurdy-gurdy and reverse him.
Use the compass rose to change the winds by the castle gardens. Give the monkey grinder the chest after he's killed the nymph.

RIGEL'S REVENGE:
Pull, pull hard, apply medication, and bend up, to get through those bars! But take the kit off first!

JACK THE RIPPER:
Move Lucifer and behead Marie Antoinette.

POLICE QUEST:
Ask the bikers to 'move the bikes' and just before they attack 'use the nightstick'.

KINGS QUEST 3:
The second time Manannan asks to be fed, mix the cookie with the porridge, and feed him that. (Create the cookie with a magic spell).
The key to the mercedes is in a chest at 1060 Preoria Street.

VENOM:
After leaving the cave, return to the inn and talk to the customer.

SHADOWGATE:
The blue wyvern can be killed – you need pzzazz from the observatory.
The dragon in the hall is a red herring.
The third key is in the banqueting hall right under your feet.
Burn something to retrieve it!
The contents of the globe counteract the Wraithe.

News

INFOCOM

Activision has announced the next back of titles from Infocom. Later this year, PC owners will be offered *Journey*, the first of a new Role-Play series. Written in the vein of Tolkien, the player joins the magical adventures of Tag, Praxix, Bergon, Esher, and Minar, taking part in their strategies and problem solving. Written by Infocom co-founder Marc Blank, *Journey* is described as a true melding of role-playing with interactive fiction. Atari ST and Amiga versions will be available early in 1989, whilst C128 owners will have to wait until the spring or summer.

Zork Zero is the game from which *Zorks 1, 2,* and *3* follow on from. This is where the Zork fan finds out about the demise of the great Underground Empire, and actually comes face to face with Lord Dimwitt Flathead and Excessive himself! Steve Meretsky has written Zork Zero using the latest generation of Infocom parser, the first Infocom graphical puzzles, and also featuring a mouse interface, and on-screen map. Atari ST and Amiga versions will be available in early 1989, and C-128 in the spring.

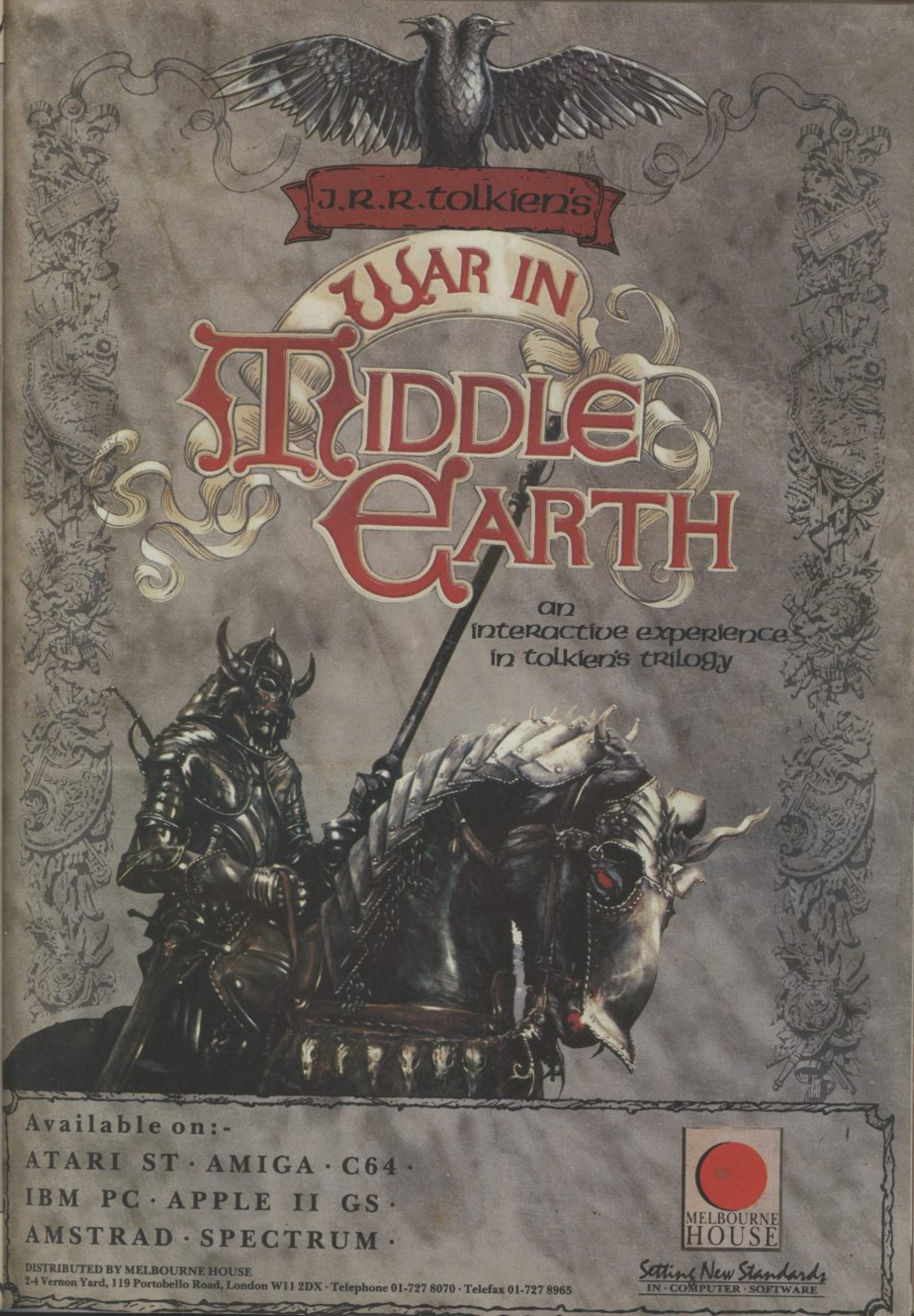
Dave Lebling is currently working on *Shogun*, an adventure based on the best selling book. This will feature Japanese style graphics for borders, and pictures to illustrate the game and reward the player. *Shogun* will be available in the spring for Atari ST and Amiga, and early summer for C-128.

And last but not least – available now, is *Zork 1* on C64 cassette, priced £9.99.

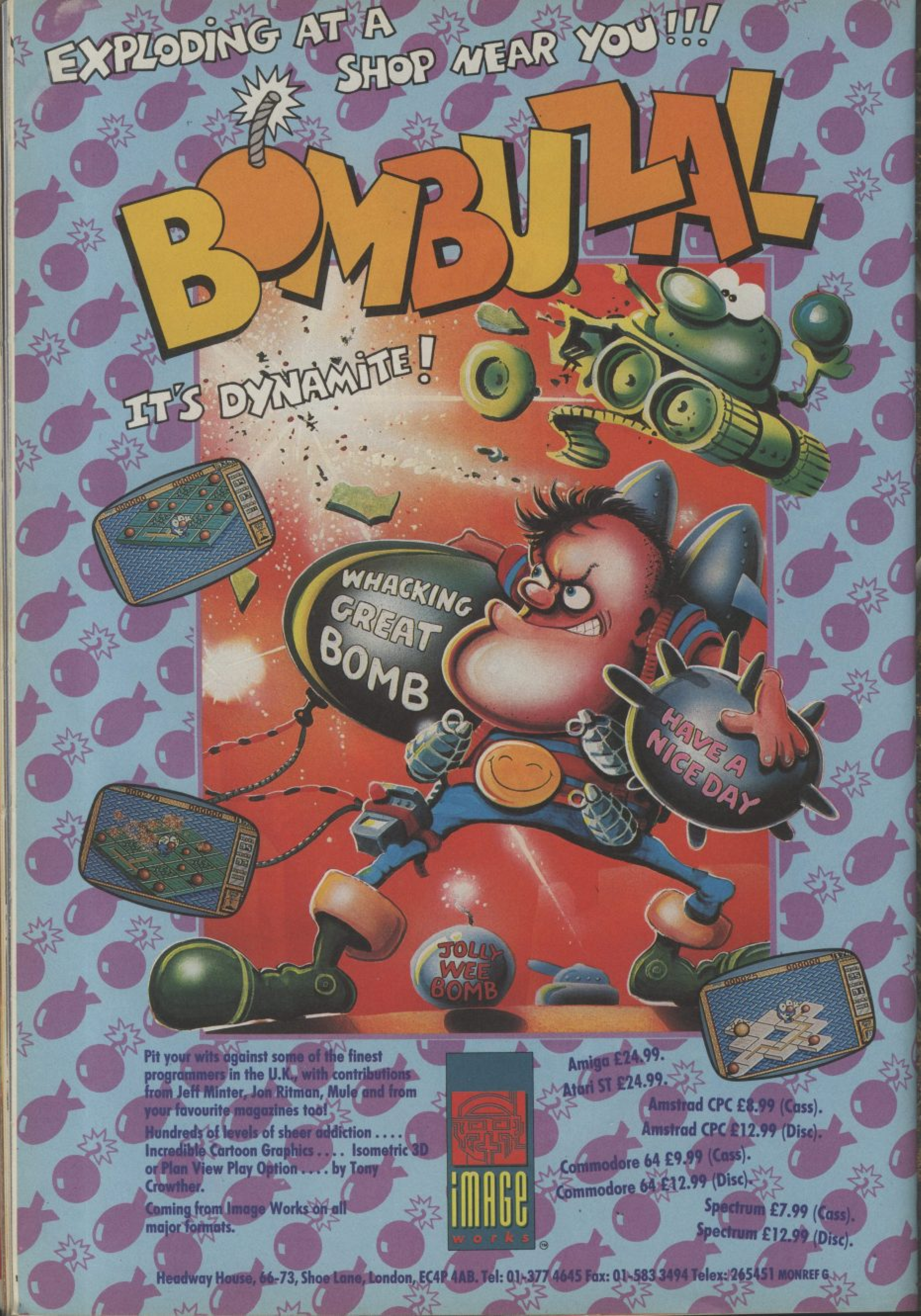
SOOTHSAYER

Soothsayer, the fanzine that specialised in complete solutions, has ceased publication. Please note that its sister fanzine, Adventure Probe, is still 'going strong', as editor Mandy Rodrigues puts it.

If any one out their is publishing a fanzine, or knows of one we haven't covered send us a cover to review.



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Mailbag

Perhaps we've been a touch mean in the past. As from now, the best letter to Mailbag each month wins a brand spanking new C + Vg T-shirt! So new, we're not even quite sure what they look like yet! So now you've no excuse, get writing to: Mailbag, Computer and Video Games, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU.

Dear Ed,

● After reading the June issue of your mag, with the brilliant preview of 'Roadblasters' and the amazing competition, I suddenly thought (No.wise cracks please) why the hell am I having your mag delivered to me every month. You may not know this, but I am one of thousands who own an Amstrad and after counting the number of reviews for the Amstrad I was disgusted to find only ONE, yes ONE review, but as a loyal reader of C + VG I decided to give you some time to get your act together, so I waited for the July edition I was amazed more than one review, in fact there were FOUR of them. I was beginning to have a little more faith in you by this time. (Thank you for the Darkside review, I am now a proud owner of a copy of the super game). Again I waited for the August edition thinking that I might get my money's worth? but no, only ONE pathetic review again. You can't have too much of a good thing, is that what they say, but no, Amstrad owners have had nothing to cheer about for sometime. So get your act together or else I will set my killer poodle on you. Also what the hell are you doing with the Mean Machines section, one month it's Nintendo and the next it's the Sega and any other bits you can put in there. The reason I am complaining about this is because I am very interested in buying either a Nintendo, Sega or PC Engine, when it comes out in Britain and the rest of Europe, could you please advise?

Darren Harris
Shropshire

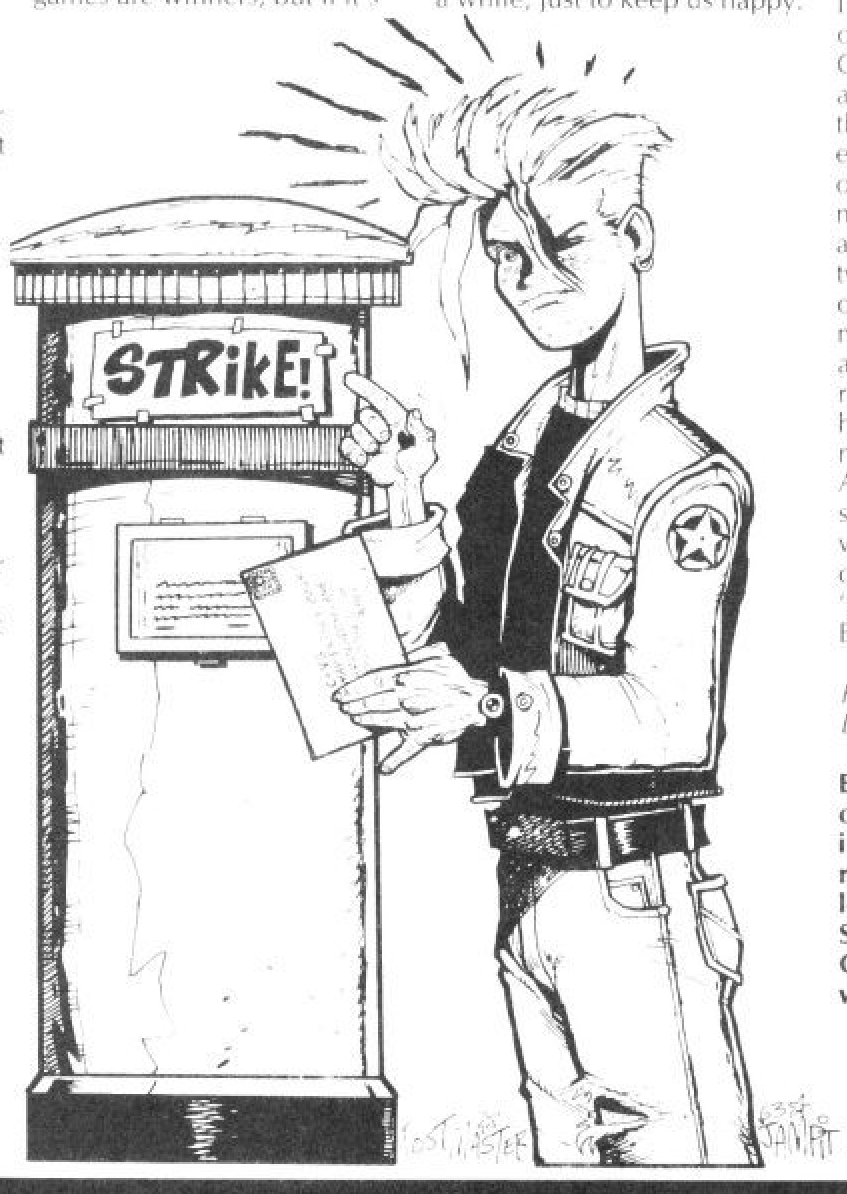
EDITOR'S REPLY: We do cover Amstrad games in our updates, but for major reviews, it's very rare that a game gets released first on the Amstrad. If it does, we'll review it, don't you worry.

● Wouldn't it be good if you could always count on a game being as good as the blurb and screen shots on the packet make it out to be. Too many software companies these days spend too much on the marketing and packaging of a game, but shell out only a measly sum on the actual design and production of it. If the game turns out to be as good as they say, then it's fair enough, but when software companies sink heaps of money into marketing a game that they know is a dud, the chances are that the credibility they lose when people play the game will cost them more in the long run than the money they make from sales. Not all games are winners, but if it's clear to the company that the game is a loser, they should either not release it, maybe give it only limited coverage or even postpone it's release until it's up to scratch.

Ah! Felt good to get that out, now to the mag: 'Love the Fiend! I haven't come across him for a while — I assume he is still around — 'hope so — there's nothing like an outside commentary (with a BAH or two thrown in for good measure) to keep the adventure world on it's toes.

I agree with fellow New Zealander, B Struan, who aired his views in June's Mailbag. I reckon you should have a special competition or two for your overseas readers, once in a while, just to keep us happy. You might be surprised how many replies you get — at any rate give it a shot, if it doesn't work at least you've tried. I say all this at risk of making myself look fairly foolish, should you have already begun a worldwide competition. I won't know for a while, this letter was written in September and according to my calculations, I won't get September 88's issue until . . . um . . .er. . . November. 'suppose I'd better get comfortable. I'll be waiting!

Yours sincerely
Alec Tricity
Devoted C + VG reader, Fiend Fan and all-round good guy.



Dear C + VG

I have been reading eagerly over the last several issues of Computer and Video Games and I have come to the decision that it is terrific value for everyone, but especially if you own an ST or Amiga! Your magazine is becoming more and more centred around these two machines. What is going on? OK I know these are the machines of the 90's, but all I'm asking is for "more and more reviews for them"! Yes! you heard me. I want your whole mag turned into an ST and Amiga mag because I too will soon be an Amiga freak, and who cares about all those saps out there who own a 'Spectrouble' or a 'Commodore Blocky'. So there!.

Keith Lynch
Dublin

EDITOR'S REPLY: Although our coverage of 16-bit is increasing, we won't stop reviewing 8-bit games. As long as there's life in Spectrums and Commodores, we'll stick with them.

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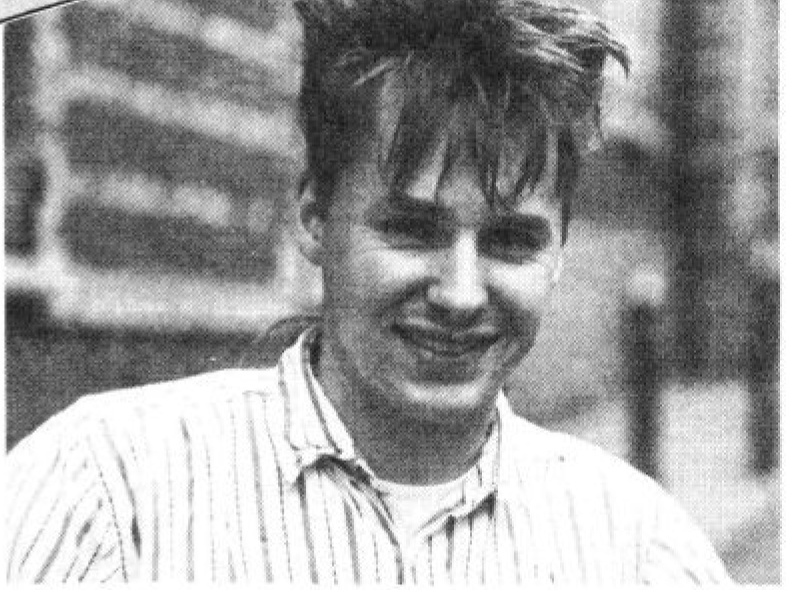
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ADVERTISEMENT INDEX

Play Masters



The Post Office strike caused quite a few worries this month – we had no mail for weeks! Fortunately the dispute ended just in time for your hints and tips to get through before we hit our deadlines. Phew! If you have any tips, POKEs or maps – on any machine – send in your stuff to: Julian Rignall, Playmasters, C + VG, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Don't forget there's a bundle of software for the month's best tips – so don't forget to state which machine you own.

HAWKEYE (Thalamus)
Martin Brear of Minster, Kent, spoke to the authors, the Boys Without Brains, at the PC Show, and they revealed that you can access the cheat mode by typing VALSSPELER on the title screen. Apparently valsspeler is Dutch for cheat! Cor!

SUPER SPRINT (Activision)
A rather silly ST tip this, but fun nevertheless. On track eight, instead of racing, turn around and position your car just before the finish line. Point it downwards, and when a drone zooms by, accelerate and drive it into the wall. It'll crash – but won't be replaced. Repeat the process for the other two cars, and you'll be free to drive around at leisure, picking up as many spanners and bonus points as you like. Don't forget to drive around in the opposite direction, though, otherwise you'll finish the race. Thanks to *Ian Walpole* for that cheat.

RAMPAGE (Activision)
Another silly ST tip, again from *Ian Walpole* of Cardiff. If you're on the last building and a cloud of dust appears under it, punch in any direction and keep your finger on the fire button until the next screen is displayed, whereupon you'll find that you can climb up an invisible building which is in the same place as the last building on the previous screen. Odd, but true.

CRAZY CARS (Titus)
If you're a Spectrum owner with a Multiface (the hardware add-on I mean, not ten heads), you might be interested in this POKE from *Edward O'Donnell* of West Lothian. Load the game with the interface shoved into the back of the machine and stop it. Enter POKE 29403,0, restart the game and you'll be granted with unlimited time. We could do with more of that here with our tight deadlines . . .

SAMURAI WARRIOR (Firebird)
Okay all you failed Ronin rabbits – use these POKES from *Bruce* and *Daz* of Doncaster you should find life a little easier. Load the game, reset the computer and enter of the following: POKE 15502, (0-127) for higher energy, POKE 15507, (0-127) for more money or POKE 14652, (0-3) for a higher starting level. If you want to go the whole hog and have unlimited energy, type POKE 20385,32: POKE 20386,245: POKE 20387,207: POKE 53237,157: POKE 53238,20: POKE 53239,39: POKE 53241,9: POKE 53242,141: POKE 53243,20: POKE 53244,39: POKE 53245,96 (RETURN). Once you've made your changes, type SYS 14336 (RETURN) to restart. These are C64 POKEs, by the way.

RASTAN SAGA (Ocean)
Unfortunately we haven't got a copy of this in the office, so I'll have to trust that this C64 Bruce and Daz listing works. Type the following listing, RUN it and then press play on tape (don't forget to bung in the game tape first) for infinite lives.

```
1 FOR A = 400 TO 457: READ
  B: POKE A,B: NEXT SYS 400
2 DATA 32, 44, 247, 32, 108,
  245, 196, 163
3 DATA 141, 196, 2, 169, 1,
  141, 201, 2
4 DATA 76, 167, 2, 160, 189,
  141, 116, 1
5 DATA 169, 1, 141, 117, 1,
  169, 88, 141
6 DATA 211, 2, 169, 96, 141,
  244, 10, 141
7 DATA 125, 10, 76, 81, 3,
  169, 96, 141
8 DATA 165, 160, 189, 173,
  141, 7, 201, 76
9 DATA 26, 129
```

GREAT GIANA SISTERS (US Gold)
If you managed to buy a copy of the Amiga version before it was stopped by Nintendo, perhaps you might find use for this tiplet. On level three there's a warp to level six, found on the first island. Stand at the end of the row of blocks and jump upwards to hit an invisible block, and you'll be transported to level six.

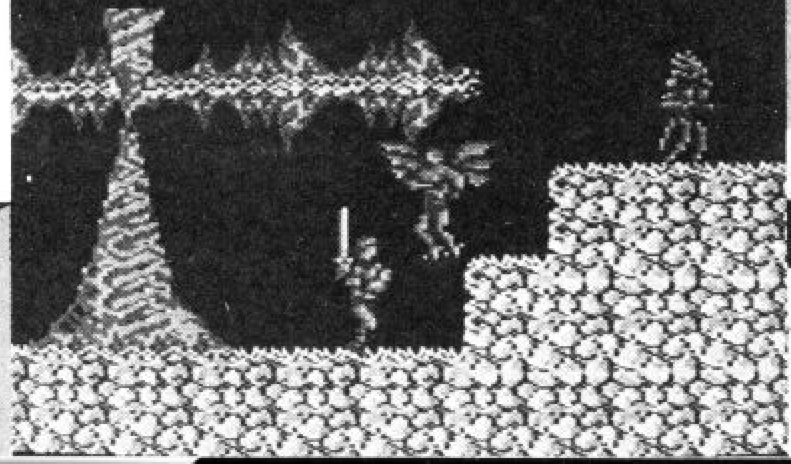
MY HERO (Sega)
This should really be in the Mean Machine sections, but what the heck! Jump over a knife thrower without touching him and HIT him in the back and you'll be awarded an extra life. *Ramon Bainathsah* of Amsterdam discovered that highly useful 'feature'.

BLACK BELT (Sega)
Another console tip from *Ramon Bainathsah*. Press the reset button at the same time the demo begins and you'll gain lives – great!

ARKANOID I + II (Imagine)
If you're a Spectrum owner and have *Arkanoid*, type PBRAIN on the highscore table to access the cheat mode. If you've got *Revenge of Doh*, type MAAAAH on the highscore table for the same effect. Atari ST *Arkanoid* players just need to press the CAPS LOCK key and type DEATHSTAR on the title screen to activate the cheat – then press S to skip levels. Cheers to *Allen Darnell* from Stevenage, Herts, for unearthing those.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN MONTY (Gremlin Graphics)
Spectrum owners who can't get Monty to safety are advised to type LOAD"":REM MONTY to load the game. If you pick up the red flag at the start of a game, Monty becomes immortal. Thanks to *Allen Darnell* for that excellent cheat.

▼ *Rastan C64 pokes*



PlayMasters

IKARI WARRIORS (Elite)
Ramon Bainathsah of Amsterdam has discovered that if you type FREERIDE on the highscore table, you'll start the next game with an invisible soldier. That's one for ST owners.

HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER (Grand Slam)
Another tip from Ramon Bainathsah, this time for Amiga owners. If you restore a saved game, all enemy ships disappear. Use it as a sort of smart bomb!

INSANITY FIGHT (Linel)
Skip levels simply by pressing L and both mouse buttons at the same time. Cheers to Ramon Bainathsah for that quickie!

FREDDY HARDSET (Imagine)
Spectrum owners can enter the second game by typing 897563 when prompted. Well, that's what *Allen Darnell* of Stevenage says.

ARMY MOVES (Imagine)
Allen Darnell has found that the code to the second load is 27351 – on the Spectrum.

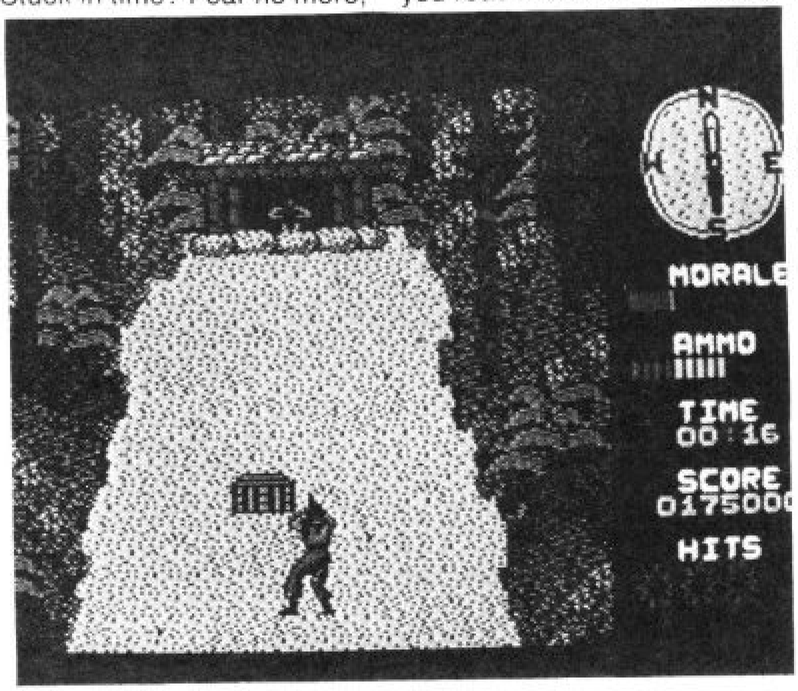
GAUNTLET II (US Gold)
A rather good tip for this excellent conversion was found by Gavin Giles of Sunderland, Tyne and Wear. When you get the "Locked treasure chests can insert helpful items" message at the start of a screen, find two locked treasure chests. As you open the first, hold down the HELP key. Having collected the treasure, open the second chest whilst holding the INSERT key. As you unlock the chest, an ankh should be revealed: collect this and you're graced with 50,000 health points and loads of super reflective shots.

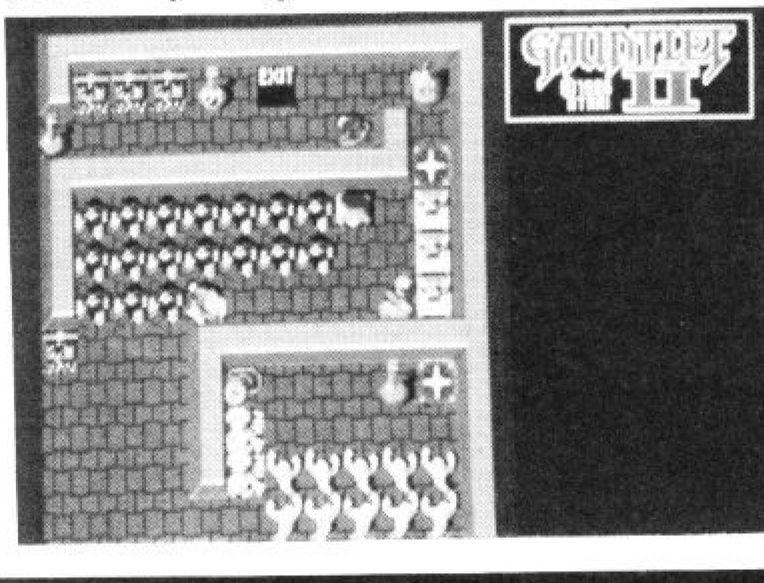
PLATOON (Ocean).
I've you've got an ST copy of this game-of-the-film, try this out. Type Humburger-Hill (the – is the minus on the numeric pad) on the title screen, and you're able to use F1-F4 to advance through the jungle, F4 taking you directly to the village. If that isn't enough, use F5 and F6 to switch on/off a shield. By the way, make sure the shield is off before you enter the trapdoor otherwise the game crashes.

WHERE TIME STOOD STILL (Ocean).
Stuck in time? Fear no more, for Alexander Stivaros of Didsbury, Manchester, is here with some extensive tips to help you on your way.

First of all, pick up the bag, bottle, medical supplies and rope which are dotted around the crashed plane. Put everything but the rope in the bag – you need that to rescue Clive. Get Gloria's compact and make your way to the rope bridge. Rescue Clive using the rope. When everyone is safe, cross the bridge and follow the cliff edge in a north-westerly direction without going up any slopes. When the characters get to an open plain, head north until the swamp is reached.

After crossing the swamp let everyone eat, drink and rest. Refill the bottle and head towards the village. Locate the chief and drop Gloria's compact using the second box, and then pick up the food and roast pork. Put the food in the bag and walk north until you reach another cliff. Find a hole in the cliff, drop the pork and quickly run past. Cross the waterfall and turn the music off so you can hear the tromp of approaching dinosaurs. Move down the slope and run in a southerly direction until you reach a river. Follow the river south around the village and go eat until you find a religious building and rest. Finally, run east towards another cliff. Find the slope that leads up into the mountains and make your way to freedom.



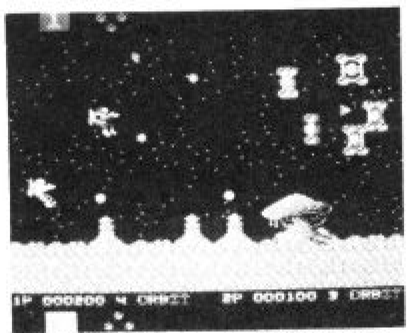


LEATHERNECK (Microdeal).
While playing, type CUTHBERTNECK and press F3 to become invincible – at least to enemy bullets. Thanks to Kingsley Hyam of South Benfleet, Essex, for that ST tip.

RETURN TO GENESIS (Firebird).
An invincibility cheat is initialised by typing WASP. ASM and pressing the F5 key. Thanks once again to Kingsley Hyam for another ST tip.

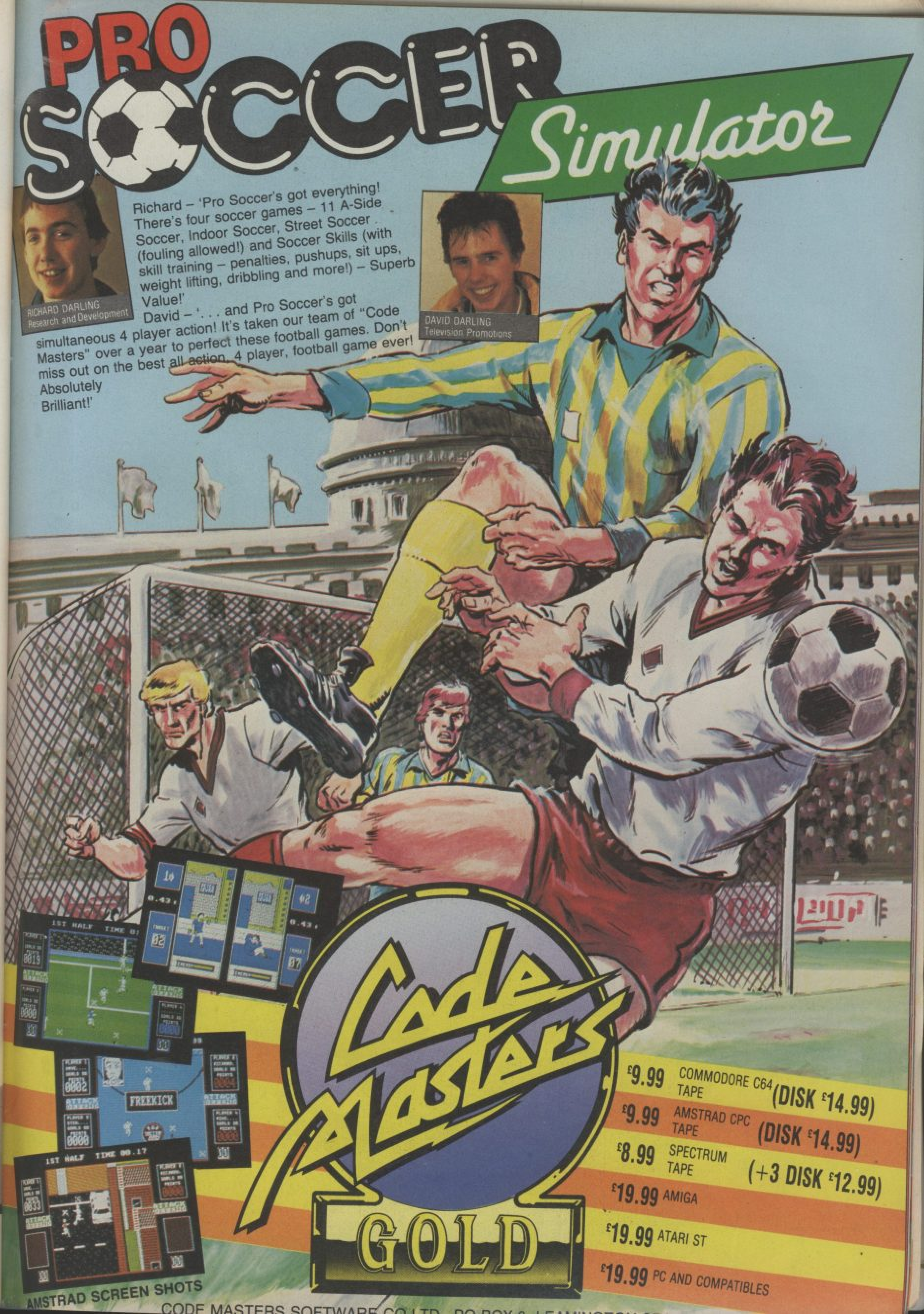
ZYBEX (Zeppelin)
Players of this neat little two-player shoot 'em up should find this C64 listing a boon. Type in the program, RUN it and press play on tape for unlimited lives. Cheers to *Bruce* and *Daz* of Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

```
100 DATA 32, 86, 245, 160, 78, 141, 200, 2, 169, 1, 141, 201, 2, 96
110 DATA 169, 91, 141, 121, 4, 169, 1, 141, 122, 4, 76, 0, 4, 169
120 DATA 189, 141, 106, 113, 76, 0, 96
130 FOR L = 320 TO 345: READ T: POKE L, T:NEXT
140 POKE 642,13:POKE 157, 128:SYS 320
```



IMPOSSIBLE MISSION (US Gold)
This excellent *Bruce* and *Daz* POKE disables all sprite-sprite collision detection, allowing you to run through robots without being harmed. Simply type in the listing, RUN it and press play on tape.

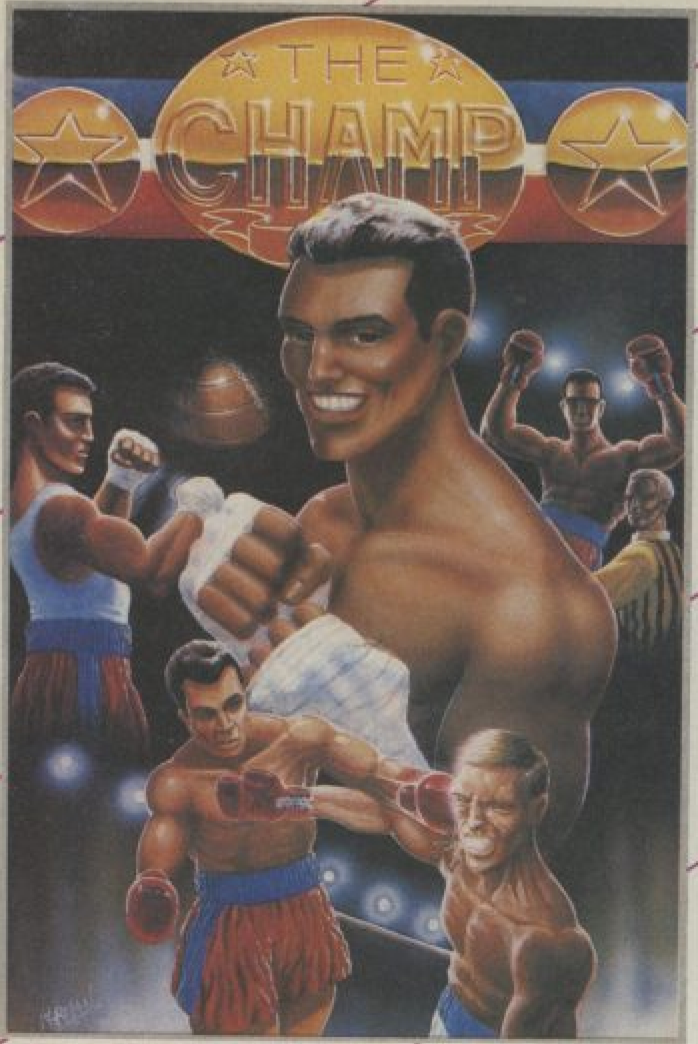
```
1 FOR X = 320 TO 347: READ A: POKE X,A: NEXT
2 POKE 646, 4:POKE 157, 128: SYS 320
3 DATA 32, 104, 225, 169, 83, 141, 243, 3 169, 1 141, 244, 3
4 DATA 76, 13, 8, 72, 77, 80, 169, 96, 141, 16, 120, 32, 132
5 DATA 255, 96
```


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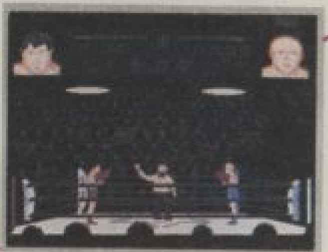




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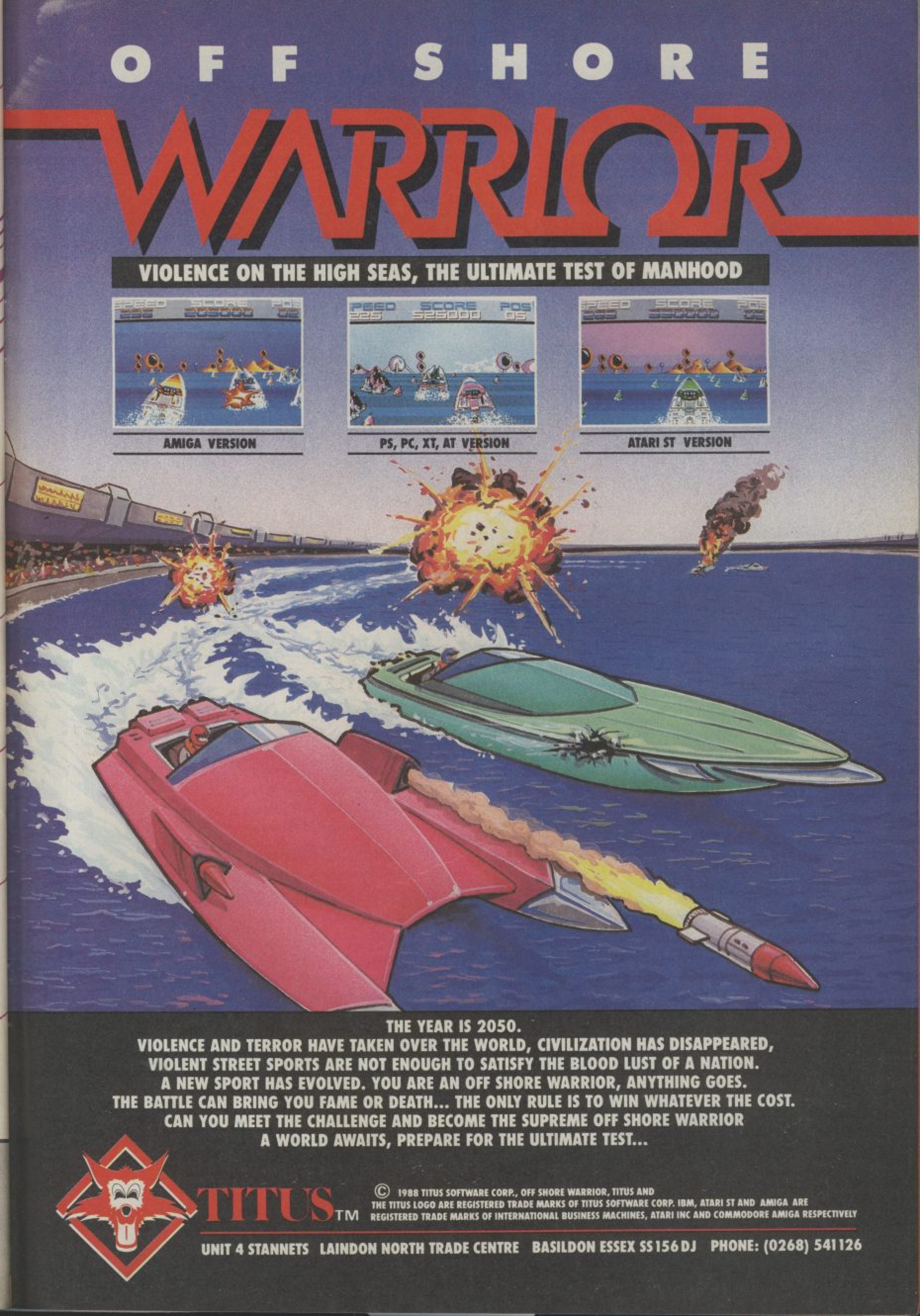
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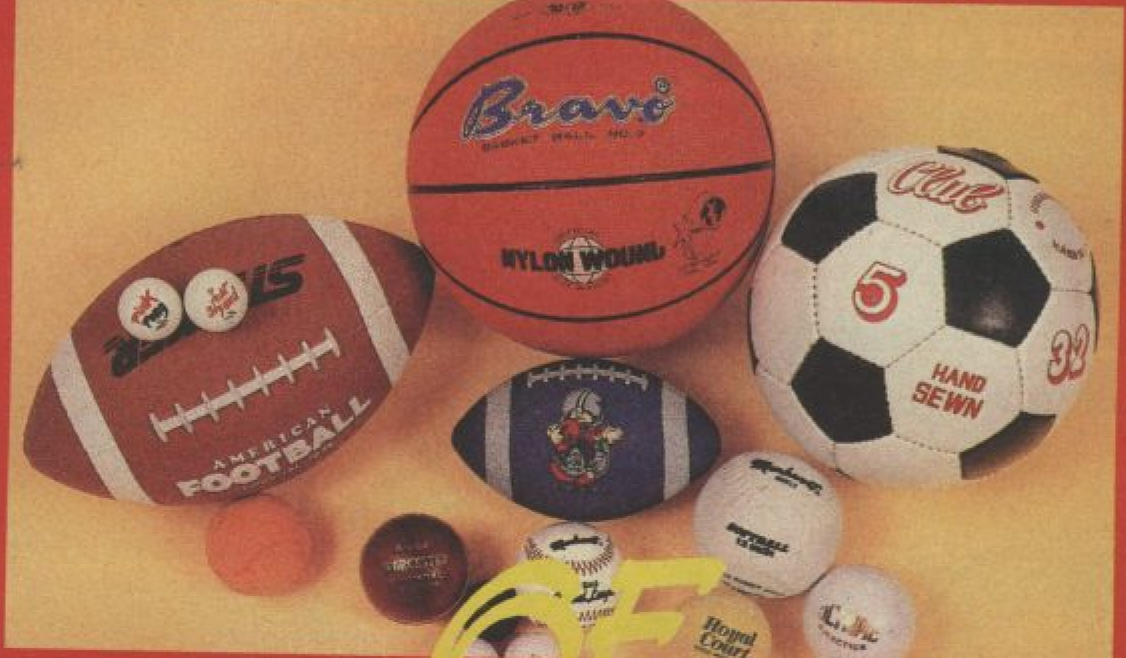
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An excellent sort of prize, we're sure you'll agree. All these come courtesy of top budget house Alternative, to celebrate the launch of their American football game *Endzone*, the latest edition to a wide range of sports sims. You're bound to have seen a least some of them; Football Frenzy, Indoor Soccer, Cricket Crazy, Howzat!, and mega-hit Soccer Boss. *Endzone* follows a similar management-type format to that best seller, and looks to be one of the big 8 bit sellers of the coming months.

The winner will get all the balls, a handy dandy bike pump adaptor to blow them up with, and a selection of alternative sports games. Twenty runners up will just get the games. Ready for the questions?

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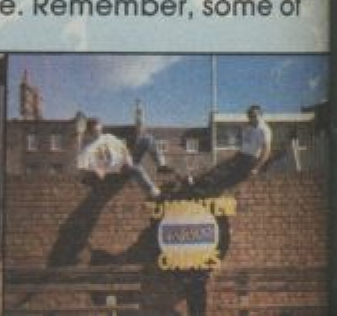
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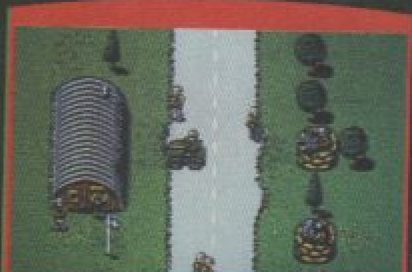
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LAST LE

You may have been waiting around for Last Ninja 2 for a while now, but we can promise it'll be worth the wait. At the risk of spoiling the fun, System 3 has helped us compile this exclusive map of the first three levels, complete with all the relevant hints and tips. Our thanks particularly to Phil Churchyard and John Twiddy. Watch out next month for the last three levels . . .

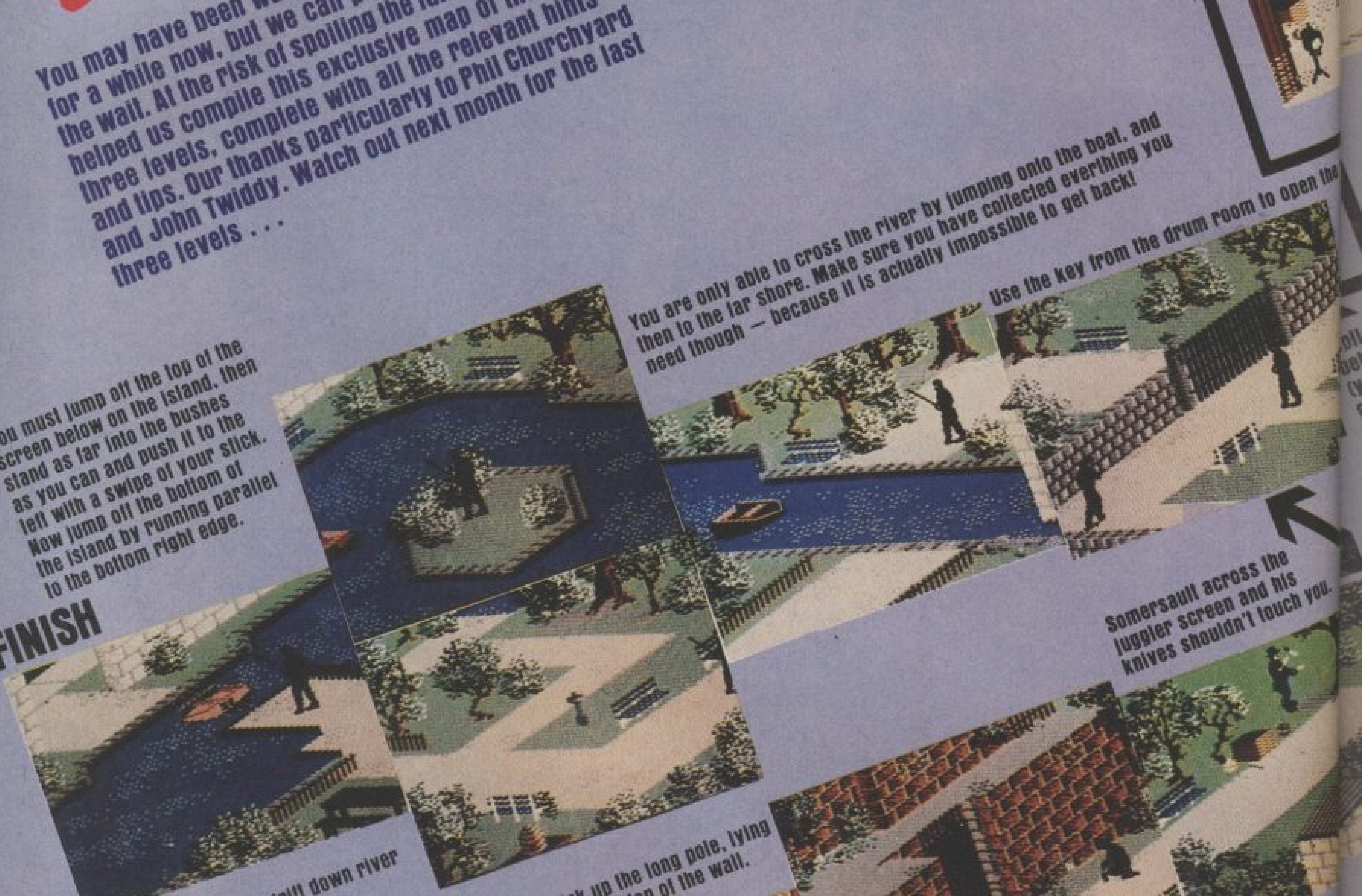
You can't get off the bandstand directly, so nip back through the curtain into the back room, beat up the guard, and punch the yellow square on the far wall. Now pop back outside, and down the open trap door.



You are only able to cross the river by jumping onto the boat, and then to the far shore. Make sure you have collected everthing you need though — because it is actually impossible to get back!

Use the key from the drum room to open the

You must jump off the top of the screen below on the island, then stand as far into the bushes as you can and push it to the left with a swipe of your stick. Now jump off the bottom of the island by running parallel to the bottom right edge.



Somersault across the juggler screen and his knives shouldn't touch you.

The boat should now drift down river across the final screen and you can use it to exit the load.

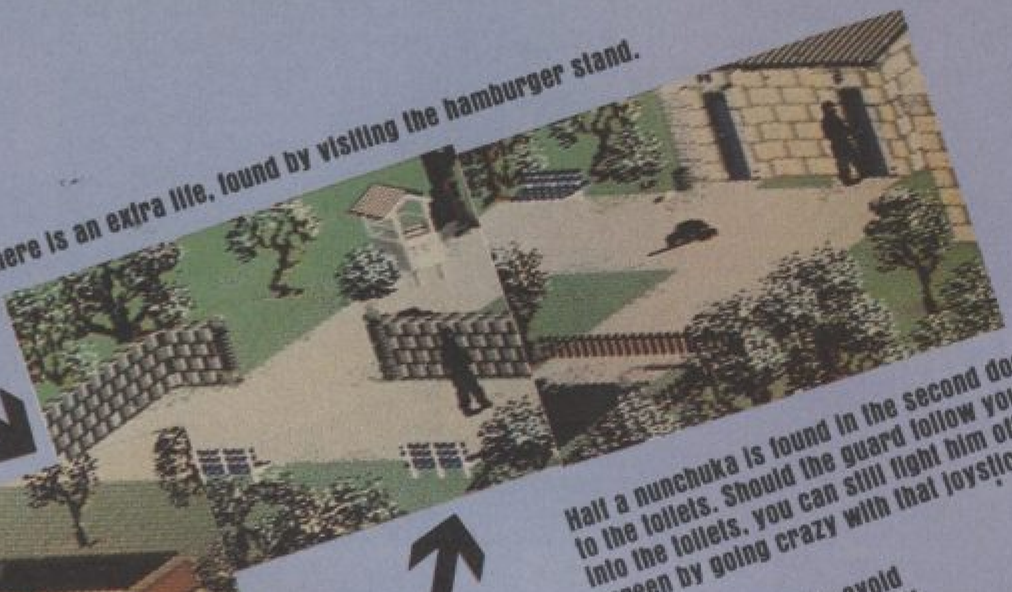
You need to pick up the long pole, lying among the sticks on top of the wall.

Collect the map on the ground where the Ninja is kneeling, and now all the objects to be collected will flash when you get near them. You need to put all the objects away before you can climb the ladder.

EVEL 1

ow
n

There is an extra life, found by visiting the hamburger stand.



Half a nunchuka is found in the second door to the toilets. Should the guard follow you into the toilets, you can still fight him off screen by going crazy with that joystick.



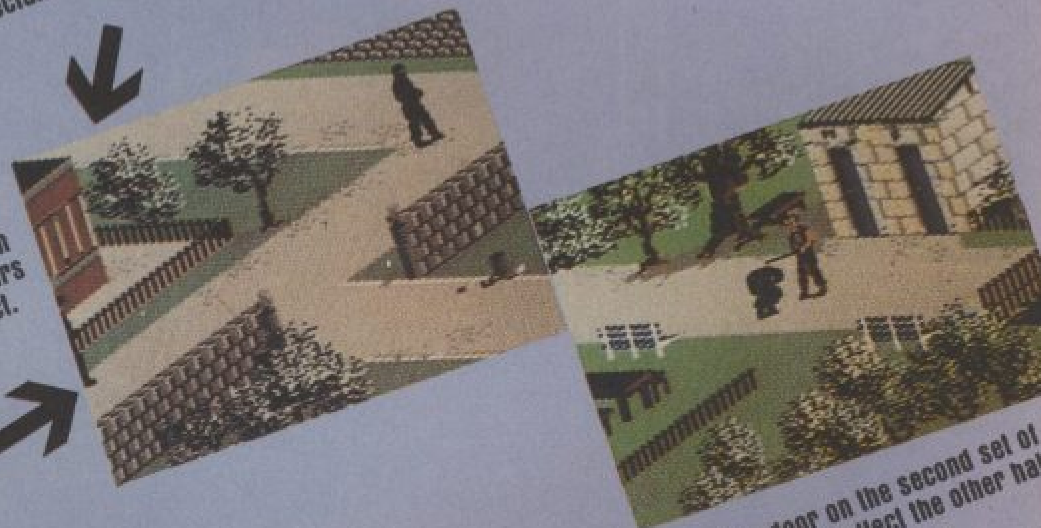
On the ring road around the central building you can usually avoid fighting the policemen by outrunning them. They can however, start to get mean and send throwing stars after you if you do this, especially on the higher levels.



n the ga

Collect the key from behind the bass drum (you need to open the gates) and proceed outside.

The box immediately behind the policeman contains throwing stars which you can collect.



Go into the "F" door on the second set of toilets, and you can collect the other half of your nunchuka, giving you a pretty useful weapon.



you.



When you "kill" a policeman or guard they won't start to regenerate as long as you continue to stand on top of them.

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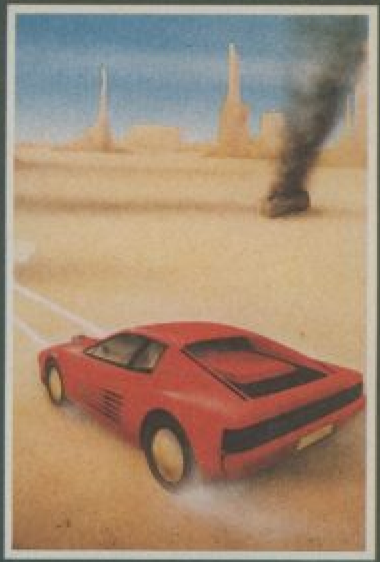


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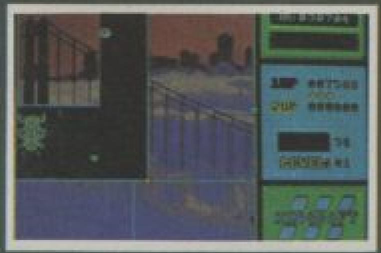




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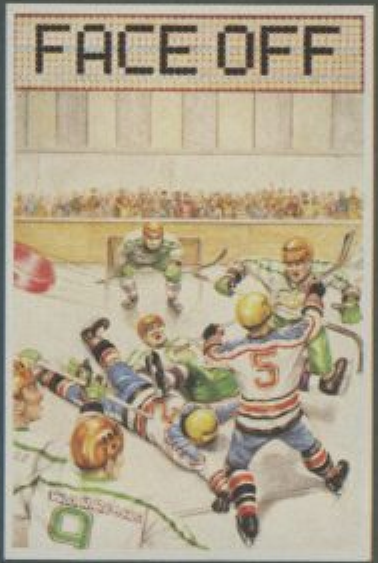


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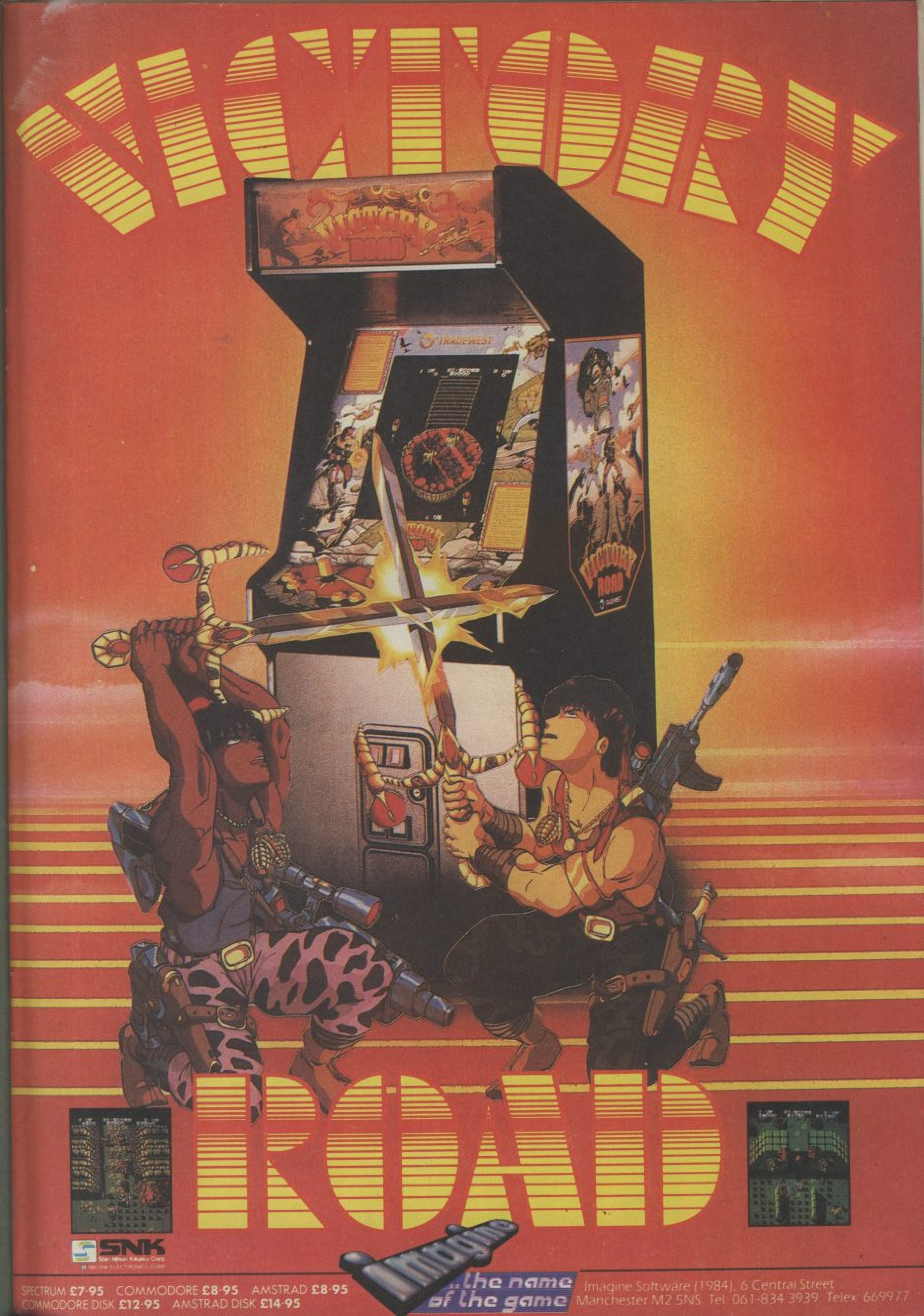
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Last Ninja 2

LEVEL 2



To exit the load, open the manhole cover up here and slip down.

This load is full of bits that wrap around, so you walk off one side of the map and end up across on the other. Thus walk off at A and you'll end up at B exit at C and enter gain at D and — most bizarre of all — exit at the top of E and you'll appear at P!

In the shop which you enter through the doors at the end of the street on the last screen collect the sword that rests in the bottom left corner.
It's not easy though — you have to kick down the doors to get in.

On all the street inter sections there are bikes which threatens to run you down. To avoid the risk, wait until the lights are green for you to cross — but make sure they are pointing the right way, and saying you can go, not the traffic!

This chap drops things at you from the windows — so watch out!

This guy throws staff at you too! like in the last load, the hamburger stand gives an extra life.

Right at the end here go into the workman's hut and collect the T-bar for pulling open manhole covers. You need this to get out of the load.

The bottle living next to the tramp down in this corner of the map is the most important item to collect — you need it for Load Three.

LEVEL 3

Collect the key lying on the ground in this screen.

Avoid the spiders that drop down on you around here!

Now use the key you have collected to open the grating and drop down.

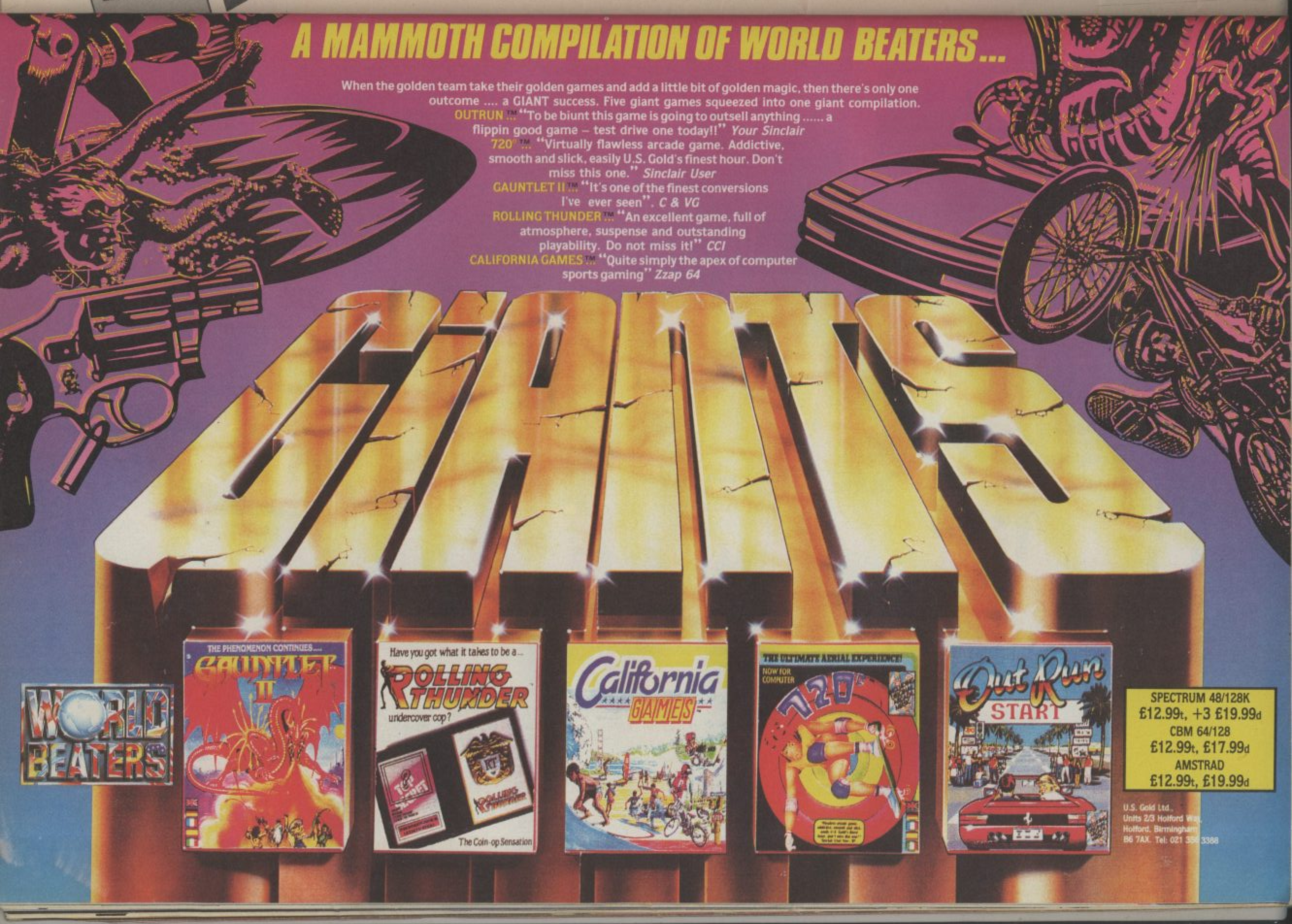
Drop down here (you can't get back up to the top level, so be sure you have ever thing).

You probably don't need telling, but you should avoid the rats on this screen.

Ignite the meths bottle you collected from the tramp in Load Two at the lamp here. You will need it as a molotov cocktail to kill the alligator at the end of the load (the picture of the alligator going up in flames isn't strictly necessary to the map, but we liked it so we put it in anyway!)

It is important to take the right exits from these screens, or you waste vital energy thrashing around in the dark. We have marked them where it is not clear — A leading to B, C to D and E to F.




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PlayMasters
Winner Stays On Round 2

First round champ Justin came with the crowds to the PC Show. On a selection of PC Engine and Arcade games, it was time to see if he could keep up his winning streak . . .



▲ *The contenders: left to right Martin Manley, Kojo Ellimah, Paul Gallagher, Justin Swords.*

Jammed somewhere in the corner of a packed Earl's Court between the Microprose Super X sim, the US Gold floozies and the Number Six bar stood the C+VG stand, populated by a squillion kiddies and a smattering of hassled staff members.

The second round of our winner Stays On contest was to be held, at arguably one of the most frenetic times of an always busy show: the dreaded Saturday lunchtime!

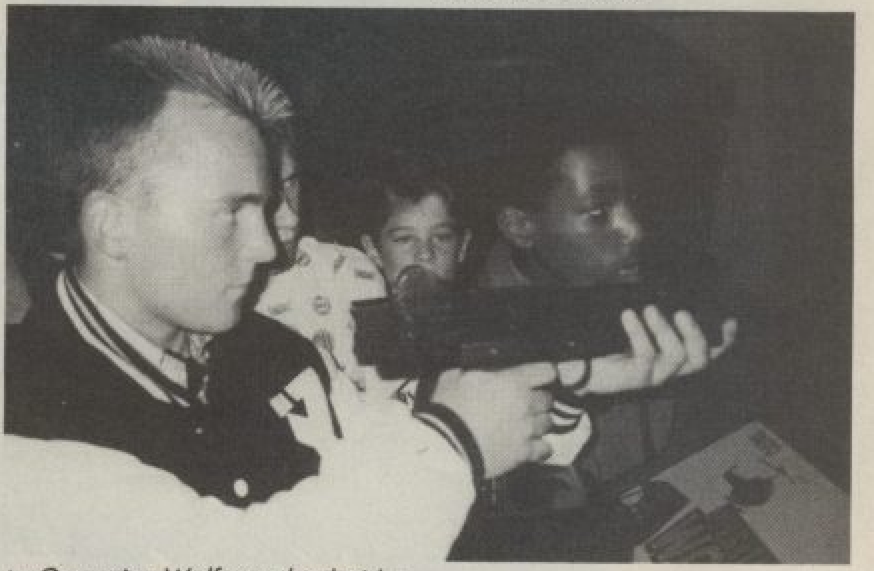
Contestants were a bundle of more or less local lads, though on the day only three challengers could make it. Though a fair few less than the initial challenge it made for far more managable numbers, and could well be the way we'll run things in the future when Winner Stays On takes to the road.

Paul Gallagher came up with a mate from Bromley in Kent, and both immediately demanded a few "words" with Justin, because "we're both Amiga owners, and in the magazine he said all Amiga owners are dickheads!" With Kojo Ellimah from north London, and Martin Manley from Hayes in Middlesex, all present and correct, and Justin eventually unearthed moseying around the Elite stand, it was time to shove the crowds out of the corner were our PC Engine lurked (the only one up and running at the show) and get on with the first game.

This was Galaga '88 – a combination of glorious graphics and simple shoot 'em up gameplay which we scarcely thought would provoke any upsets. This was not be, however, as Kojo, who had admittedly looked very strong in the practice bouts, surged into the lead, leaving Justin trailing by nearly 15,000 points in third place. Previous Winner stays on contestants like Neil White and arch-rival Jonathan Wood who had showed up at Earl's Court to watch the fun had predicted an easy victory for Justin, but this was clearly not going to be the case.



▲ *Justin sports a C+VG T-shirt, Matt a bad haircut.*



▲ *Operation Wolf was the decider.*

SCORECARD

	GALAGA '88	R-TYPE	P.O.W.	OPERATION WOLF	TOTAL
Martin Manley, a sixteen year old Spectrum owner from Hayes, Middlesex.	3	2	1	1	7
Kojo Ellimah, a fifteen year old Amstrad player from Palmers Green, London.	4	3	3	3	13
Paul Gallagher, age fifteen, an ST owner from Bromley, in Kent.	1	1	2	2	6
Justin Swords, our current champ from sunny Coventry.	2	4	4	4	14

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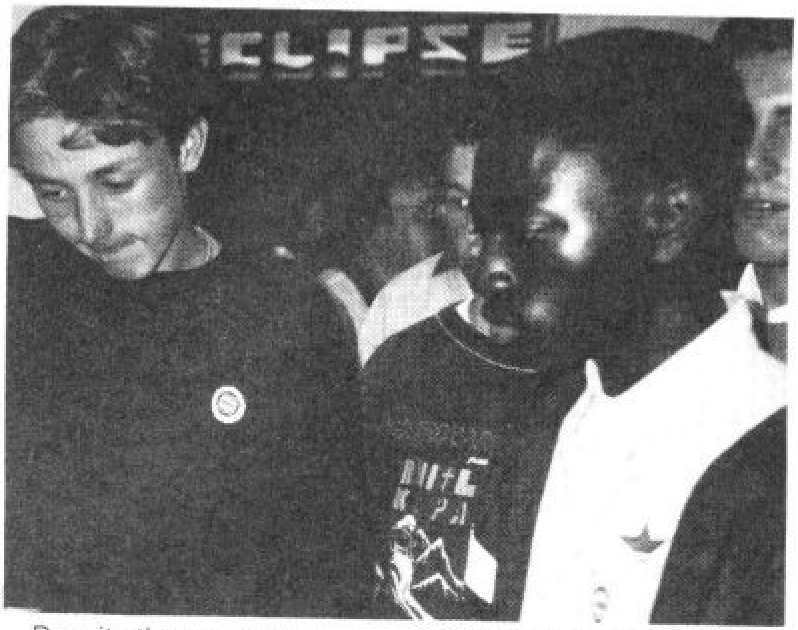
Play Masters

Winner Stays On Round 2

Justin was busy blaming the oddly shaped PC engine control panel – and the fact that he had sold his ST and was out of practice! – on his relatively poor performance as we started them out on R-Type. Martin kicked off, scoring a respectable 36 800 in 2 mins 46, and was followed by Paul and Kojo with very similar performances. Unused to both the game and the controls, none managed to beat the end of the first level.

This was the turning point for Justin: by the end of the alloted five minutes he had most of his lives left and was pushing at the start of the third level. The points gap between him and nearest rival Kojo was incredible – Justin had more than doubled his score – but if Kojo was to continue to be such a strong challenger, he must still come first in both remaining events.

▼ *Paul and Kojo sweat it out.*



Despite the pressure, Justin was content to lean against the arcade machine and listen to S-Express on his personal as Martin began play on new beat 'em up P.O.W. In three minutes there Kojo once again racked up a respectable score, but Justin did better with 4450 before he ran out of lives. A quick totting up the scores, allowing four points for the best performance on each game, with three for the second etc left Justin and Kojo neck and neck – only Operation Wolf would decide.

Turfing off the crowd gathered around this most popular of the free play arcade machines, we set down to settle the thing. With both Martin and Paul now out of it as far as winning was concerned, their performances scarcely mattered, though Paul in particular did pretty well. In the end though, it was down to Justin beating Kojo's 35450 – which he did in style!

Our champ had survived the first attempt to take away his title, therefore, and all there remained to do was dosh out the T-shirts and other prizes and take photos. We left with Justin and old rival Jonathan itching for a private rematch on the arcade machines, and the big prize (ST, Amiga, PC Engine?) only one round away.

Fill out the slip below, send it off, and you could be called up for a future challenge.

▼ *POW caused quite a hit.*



WINNER STAYS ON ENTRY FORM

Justin will be putting his money where his mouth is in another challenge coming soon to a town near you! If you want a chance to have a crack at the champ, list your high scores on the form below and post it to: C + VG Winner Stays on, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Name ______________________

Address ______________________

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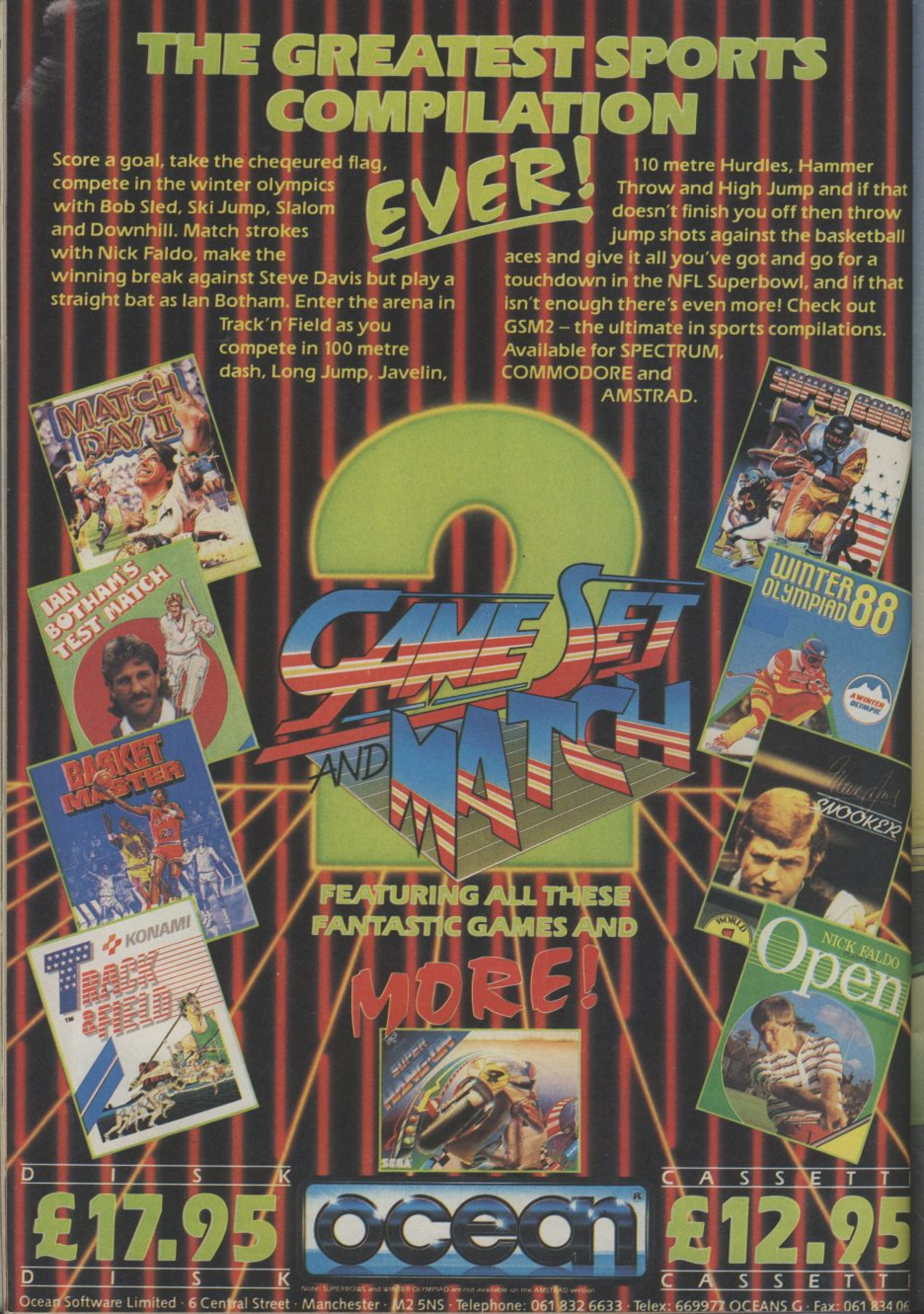
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Age ______________________

GAME	MACHINE	SCORE



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Mean Machines

This month sees Thunderblade roaring in on the Sega, and there's also a review of the classic Nintendo game, Mario Bros. The long-awaited Super Mario Bros II gets an exclusive preview, and we also give the low-down on how to become a champion Punch-Out!! boxer. And there's all the latest console news – what more could you ask for?

Mario Bros.

► MACHINE: NINTENDO.
► PRICE: £19.95.
► REVIEWER: TONY TAKOUSHI.

Mario and Luigi are firm favourites in the arcades and have been seen in the Donkey Kong trilogy (Donkey Kong IV should be nearing completion around now), Wrecking Crew and the Mario Brothers series (not to mention guest appearances in such games as Punch-Out!!). Well, this is one of the first times they appeared in together.

It's a classic ladders and ramps game with the player(s) chasing around a series of horizontal platforms trying to kill a load of very weird and wonderful creatures.

The game is very simple to play; you simply run left or right and jump to punch the platform above you. If a creature is walking along that platform, it is knocked over and stunned for a few seconds, allowing either Mario or Luigi to run over it and kill it. If either player touches a creature when it isn't stunned, one of three lives are lost. If the creature reaches the bottom of the screen, it disappears into a pipe and reappears at the top of the screen and runs along at an even greater speed!

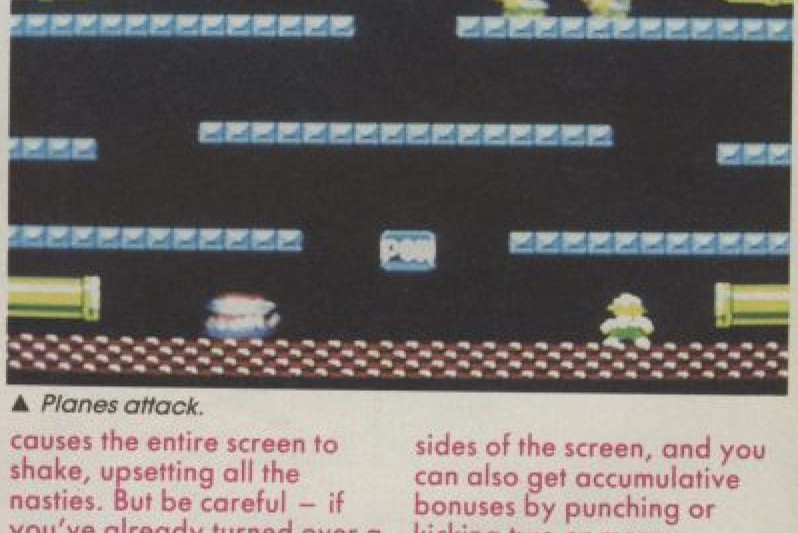
Some of the creatures are very strange indeed, and include cute turtles, crabs (which need to be punched twice), hopping fighter flies and ice cold freezies to avoid.

Another dangers come in the form of fireballs which float around the screen and try and restrict movement. They're fatal to touch and can provide much hassle on later levels.

If you find the going particularly tough, you can always chicken out and use the POW bag at the bottom of the screen. Punching this causes the entire screen to shake, upsetting all the nasties. But be careful – if you've already turned over a creature, punching the POW bag will turn back on his feet!

Bonus points are earned by collecting gold coins that occasionally float on from the sides of the screen, and you can also get accumulative bonuses by punching or kicking two or more creatures.

There are also bonus rounds where you have to collect all the coins from a screen within the allotted time limit; get them all and a special "perfect" bonus is awarded.



▲ *Planes attack.*

▼ *The first level is a vertical shoot 'em up.*



What makes the game really enjoyable is the one or two-player option, which allows Mario and Luigi to play simultaneously, either as a team, or as enemies (it depends on your choice of tactics). For me, the competitive edge of two players battling together really makes the game – but the game is still incredibly enjoyable when you play solo.

The graphics are simple and clean, but it's the gameplay is superb; simple, yet incredibly addictive. Go for it!

► GRAPHICS 6
► SOUND 5
► VALUE 7
► PLAYABILITY 8
► OVERALL 80%



▲ *Thunderblade is destroyed by tanks.*



▲ *It takes teamwork to get through the game.*

Thunderblade

► MACHINE: SEGA.
► PRICE: £24.95.
► REVIEWER: TONY TAKOUSHI.

Sega coin-ops are getting and better and their conversions to the home system are getting better and better too! *Thunderblade,* the hit coin-op has been converted to the Sega consule format on a 256K cartridge. The coin-op relies heavily on graphics and perspective shifts; obviously the home version is limited in perspective shifts but ALL the playability and some really spine-tingling graphics have been S-Q-U-E-E-Z-E-D into this monster conversion!!!

The scene is set with rebel forces having invaded your country, and their plan is to overthrow the government and replace it with their own cruel and corrupt dictator (boo, hiss).

You are the finest helicopter pilot alive and go under the name Gunship Gladiator. The mission is simple: pilot the Thunderblade helicopter in a battle to the death with the advancing enemy.

Thunderblade has four stages: Urban Combat/Mountain and Desert/River Delta and Refinery. In each stage you encounter both ground and air forces and the scenes feature vertical and horizontal scrolling. At the end of each stage you battle a Super Fortress.

Presentation is state-of-the-art. Thunderblade is a prime example with a hi-res piccy (just like the arcade!) of a helicopter flying through a city and the little etched in *Blood Red* across it. You start the game with three lives, and extra lives are given at 500,000 points and then every million (you have to WORK for these babies!).

On pressing the fire button you are shown the stage number and the number of lives, and then you enter battle. The first scene is Urban Combat (a vertical scroll) and has you blasting your way through a city high above its rooftops. The enemy take the form of jungle green helicopters who are just dying to let you have it with their machine guns and death-dealing swoops.

You really have to be on your toes, the action comes thick and fast and you will find yourself lunging (as I did) for the pause button to rest your tired hand – the action is incredibly hectic.

If you make it to the end of the first part you swoop up off the top of the screen and find yourself zooming down between buildings zapping formations of helicopters that approach from above, below and the sides of the screen. All the while the buildings hurtle past on either side of you. There are some good combinations here and if you are hot on the trigger you can take out whole formations and wack up the score.

The real villains here are the tanks which fire intense white missiles at you, which have a nasty habit of being very accurate.

At the end of this stage you face a Super Fortress. This is a *huge* jet fighter with machine guns. You have to fly around it and take out the gun bases and destroy the control in the nose cone.

Stage Two has you fighting wide sweeping patterns of helicopters over a gorgoes gold-coloured mountains. The tanks below are determined to take you out, so again you need to be fast on trigger and reflexes.

If you survive these you will see a cliff face ahead with an entrance in the left side. You have to zoom down into this entrance and then quickly swerve back to the right and you are attacked by lightning fast jets.

Thunderblade rates as one of the fastest games I have ever played, and also has some of the finest graphics in any Sega game. The sound and spot effects bounce along with the action. To get the best out of this game I would recommend you invest in the

start fast.

Just before you leave the cave there are a mess of tanks firing at you. Avoid these and fly out through the exit to a wide open plain again where



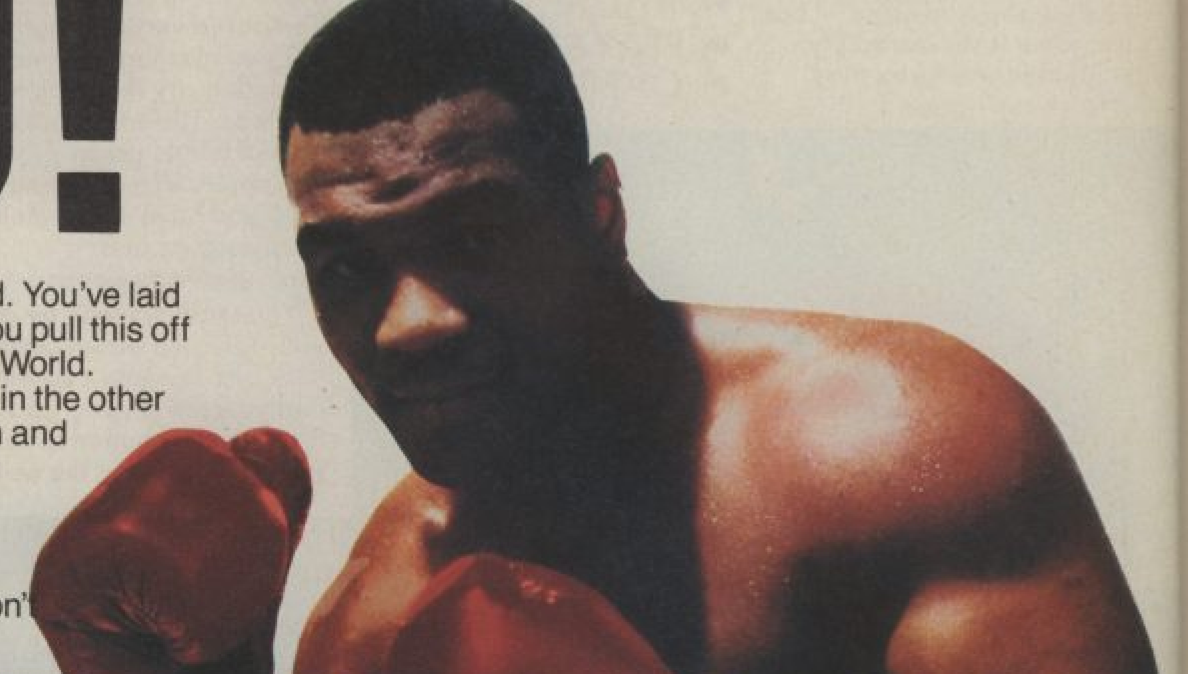
Rapid Fire unit from Sega as this guarantees you a fast mega-blast and helps save your trigger finger.

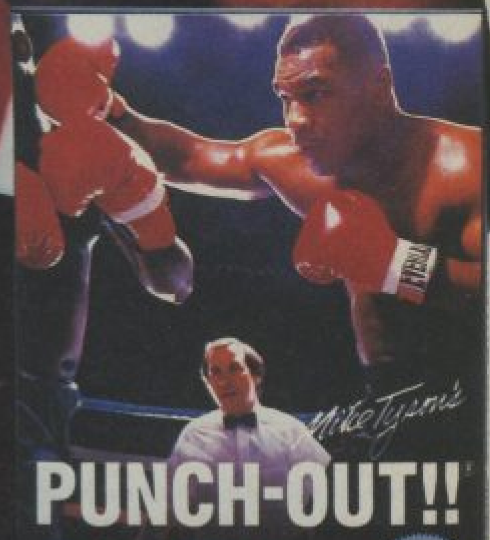
Thunderblade is second to none as an arcade game, and this conversion gets the thumbs up . . .

► GRAPHICS 9
► SOUND 7
► VALUE 7
► PLAYABILITY 9
► OVERALL 80%

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And remember, this is Nintendo, right? So you might get beat, but you won't get hurt.



1. You're Little Mac and your first opponent is Glass Joe.



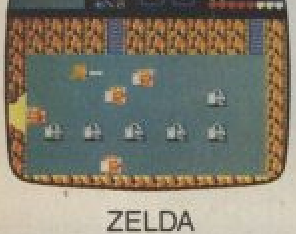
2. The bell's gone. Now it's up to you.



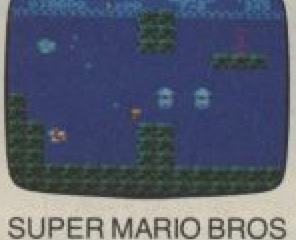
3. Go for it!

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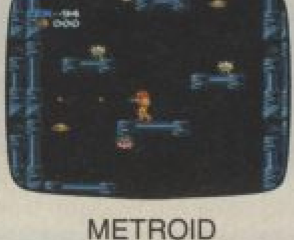
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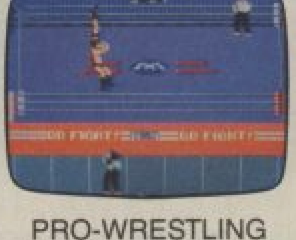
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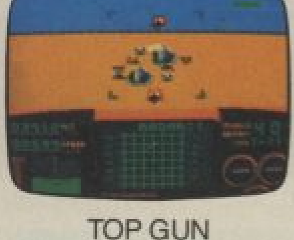
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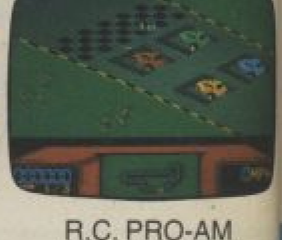
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Mean Machines Tips

Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!

So you want to be a boxer, eh? Well, the key to success lies in finding your opponent's weakness. Every one of the *Punch-Out!!* boxers has a particular weakness, which, when discovered, can give Little Mac (the player) a big advantage. The other thing is to always watch your opponent so you know exactly what he's doing, otherwise he may surprise you with a mighty punch.

The first opponent is poor old Glass Joe, a very weak boxer who is easily beaten with repeated punches. Watch out for his big punch, then dodge left when he hits, and follow through with a series of face and body blows. As soon as you get a star, use your powerful uppercut to floor him!

Next comes Von Kaiser, a much more difficult opponent. When his trousers flash, dodge right when he punches, and if he crouches, sway left and follow up with face punches. If possible, use an uppercut to floor him.

Piston Honda is a fairly formidable opponent – if you don't know his characteristics. When he twitches his eyebrows he's about to do a telegraph punch, so sway away to the right, and follow with blows to the face. If he crouches, sway left and do the same. Honda's speciality is the Piston punch: he steps back, growls and delivers five mighty blows – block his efforts with well-timed presses of the block key, and give him a series of face punches.

If you defeat Honda, you're promoted to fight on the WVBA Major Circuit. The first opponent is Don Flamenco, and he's very easy meat. Punch him once and he'll attack witha big right hook. Dodge this and counter-attack with repeated left-right blows and keep going until you floor him. When he gets up he'll throw another right punch; dodge left and use the one-two technique again, and again if he manages to stagger to his feet a third time!



▼ Knock out Piston Honda!



▲ *King Hippo.*

Now comes the first if the real tough guys: King Hippo. He blocks all your punches, and seems invincible – until you punch him when he's got his mouth open. This stuns him momentarily, and he exposes his obese Williams-like stomach, allowing you to attack with a series of body blows. When he recovers, keep dodging his punches until he opens his mouth again, and let him have it, and follow up with more body blows. If you stick to this method, you should knock him out, and once he's down he never gets up.

There's magic on the side of the next boxer, Great Tiger. As well as being an excellent pugilist, he's also capable of the deadly Tiger Magic punch. When the bout starts, keep watching his turban. When the jewel at the centre flashes, dodge he inevitable right punch and counter with a right, and wait for the jewel to flash again. If he does a crouching punch, dodge and follow up with as many face punches as possible. If he uses a Tiger Magic punch, use five blocks to counter his attack, and then hit him once in the face when he stops to floor him. Timing is critical, and is takes a lot of practice to become proficient.

The final Major Circuit fighter is Bald Bull, a large and powerful psychopath. Early in the bout use body and head punches, and you should be awarded with some stars, allowing you to use uppercuts to knock down his energy. Keep at him until he starts jabbing and using crouching punches, whereupon you should block and dodge respectively.

When he gets really mad he'll attempt a Bull Charge – he runs to the back of the ring, jumps forward three times and delivers a deadly punch that'll floor you. The only way to avoid this terrible attack is to punch him in the body as he takes his third jump. Timing is incredibly tight, and if you miss, you'll be KO'ed. Again, practice makes perfect.

And now you're onto the WVBA World Circuit, with six opponents – Piston Honda, Soda Popinski, Crazy Bucking Bull, Flamenco's Counterattack, Sandman and Super Macho Man standing between you and that dream fight with World Champion Mike Tyson. Go for it!

Don't forget that pressing the select button between rounds makes Doc rub your back faster, giving you more energy for the next round – although you can only use that option once per fight. If you're really weedy, and can't make it through the early rounds, here are two passcodes:
005 737 5423 (To start on the Major Circuit).
641 731 7533 (To start on the World Circuit).



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Mean Machines

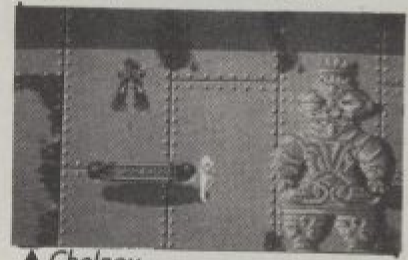
• Rumours still abound that a PC Engine version of Space Harrier will soon be appearing, although there's no hard evidence as yet. What is definitely going to be released on the pint-sized console is a tennis simulation (which should play very similarly to the VS Tennis games already released on the Nintendo and Sega), an original RPG-style game called Tales of the Monster Path and a conversion of the vertically scrolling shoot 'em up, Dragon Spirit. They should all maintain the generally high standard of PC Engine games already available, and hopes are particularly high for Dragon Spirit.

• If you're getting a sore thumb playing all those brilliant Sega shoot 'em ups, you need fret no longer. Sega are about to release an autofire widget that fits between your joystick/card and the machine and increases your firepower dramatically. It costs around £5 and is a real boon for trigger happy zappers – especially if you've been playing Thunderblade.

▼ *The Sega autofire.*



• At the last CES show in America, Nintendo were previewing a whole host of new arcade licences and film tie-ins. Amongst the titles were a conversion of Epyx' super sports simulation,



▲ *Chelnov.*



▲ *Robocop.*

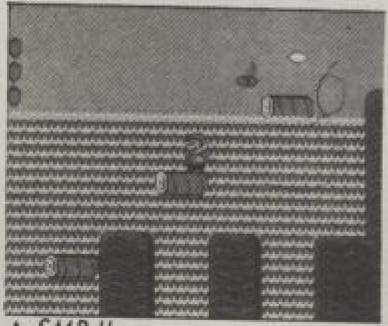


▲ *Freedom Force*

California Games and Indiana Jones and the Temple of doom, based on the rather disappointing Atari coin-op-of-the-film. Robocop, Operation Wolf, which is looking exceptionally good, Rampage, the classic old Atari coin-op Marble Madness, Rampage, Chelnov, Road Runner and Freedom Force were also there. We'll be bringing you more details when we have them.

Super Mario Bros. II

Super Mario Bros is widely regarded as one of the greatest ever video games, and the fact that it has sold over 12,000,000 copies is a testimony to its phenominal inventiveness. The long-awaited sequel was



▲ *SMB II.*

released in Japan and America earlier this year, and looks every bit as good as the original.

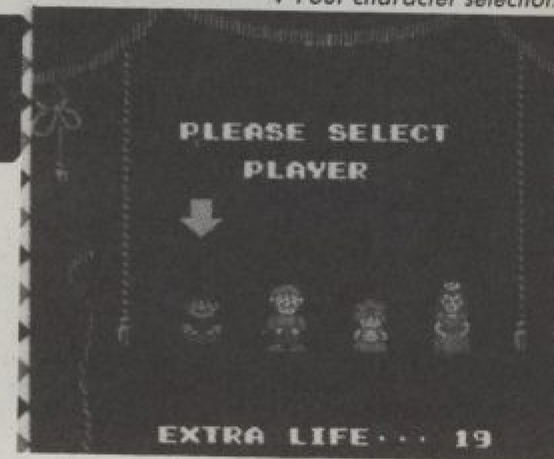
The game consists of seven different worlds, each split into three sub-levels, guarded by a Little Boss who is destroyed to progress to the next level.

As well as incorporating similar horizontally scrolling platform and ladders-type gameplay as the sequel, there are also vertically scrolling sections where the player ascends and descends the landscape.

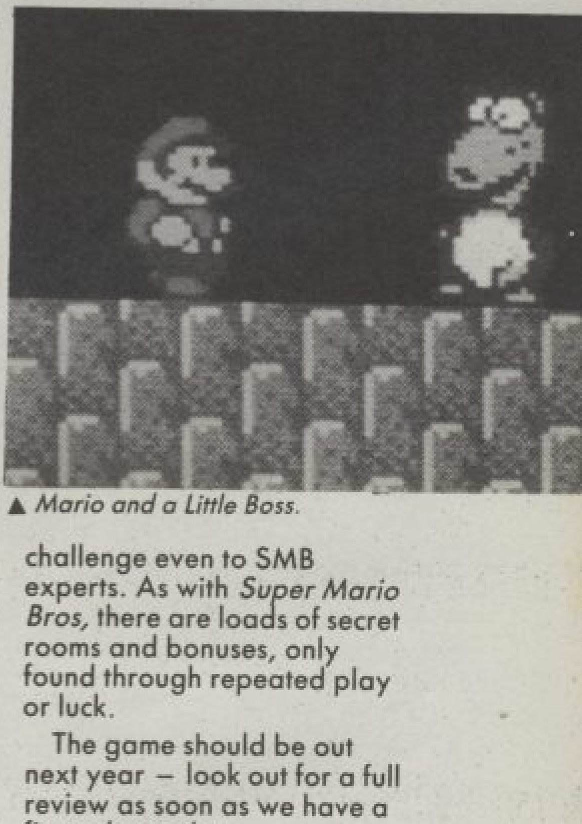
At the start of a game the player chooses one of five characters: Mario, Luigi, Toad or the Princess. Each has his or her own characteristics: Mario is a good all-rounder, Luigi can jump high, but slows when he's carrying something, Toad is strong, but isn't a good jumper, and the Princess can float for a second and a half.

On the first level there are waterfalls and chasms to avoid before clambering up to where the first Little Boss resides. Next comes a magic carpet ride, some more horizontally scrolling landscape and an

▼ *Four character selection*



underground section. More waterfalls are negotiated in the third, as well as a tortuously long climb down into the underground. *Super Mario Bros II* is far harder than its predecessor, and should provide a tough



▲ *Mario and a Little Boss.*

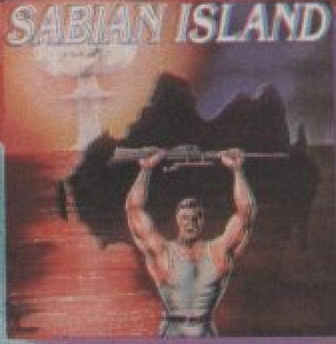
challenge even to SMB experts. As with *Super Mario Bros,* there are loads of secret rooms and bonuses, only found through repeated play or luck.

The game should be out next year – look out for a full review as soon as we have a firm release date.

▼ *And there's more.*

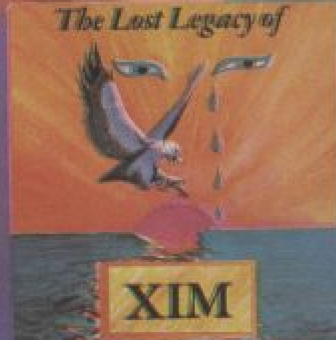


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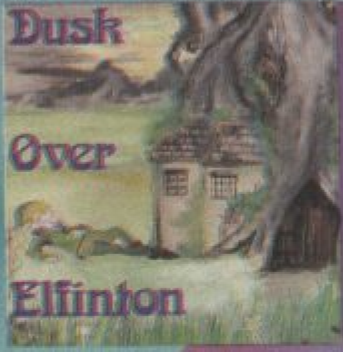
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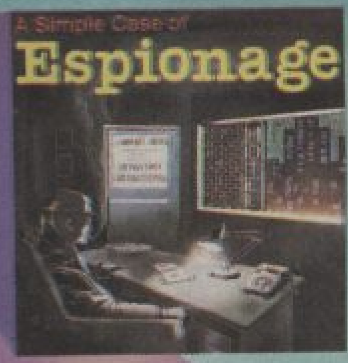
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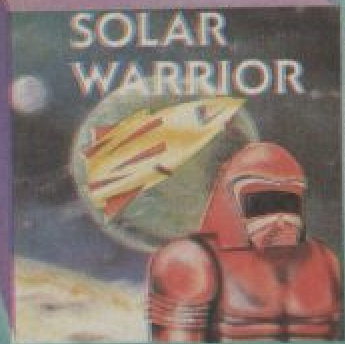
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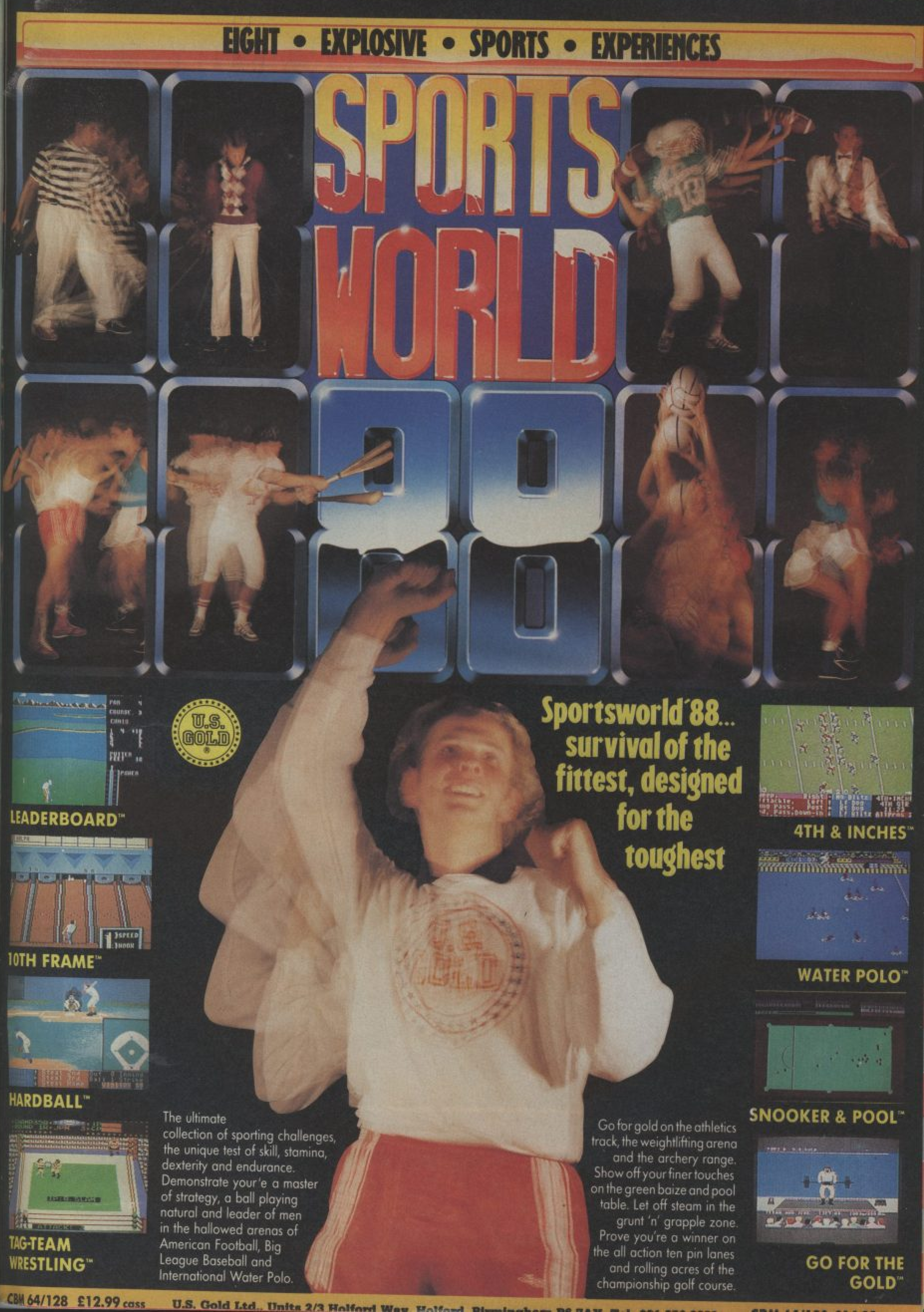
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Next Month



Operation Wolf needs no introduction to arcade fans. It is the top grossing coin-op of the year. Next month we have a full review of all versions – including a *C + VG* exclusive on the 16 bit versions.

You won't read these reviews anywhere else – so don't miss us at all costs.

Another good reason to be at the newsagents with £1.20 in your pocket is the C + VG freebie. Taped to the front cover is the definitive answer to the question on everyone's lips – what will be the top selling game this Christmas? C + VG has the answers.

ARCADE

If you've ever fancied driving a Porsche, wearing your Y-fronts outside your tights, battling Indians or fighting through a mysterious forest, now's your chance – in your local arcade.

CHASE HQ

Apprehend and arrest is the key to this rollicking car chase based loosely on Miami Vice and the maxim that the good guy, if he can drive fast enough, always wins.

A screen flashes up before you at the start of the game. Your turbo charged black sports car is parked at the side of the highway as Nancy's message from HQ comes in. The speech is excellent and very clear as she passes on the message to hotfoot it after a white sports car, British make.

"Go Mr Driver," you yell at your buddy and with a loud whoop you're off on the chase, screaming around corners, dodging in and out of trucks, lorries, and cars. Arrows appear pointing out the direction you're to take as the road splits, and with a scream of anguish you plough through some crash barriers and onto a half-made dirt track. Rocks and debris coat the road and making out the right route is almost impossible as you bounce from side to side uprooting bushes and trying to miss huge boulders.

With a snap you're back onto tarmac and screeching down the road. A tunnel looms as you speed into its blackness to emerge on the other wide with an arrow pointing straight at your quarry. The criminals are racing down the highway.

An arm goes out to fit the siren to the top of your car and now the chase is really on. The driver hits the turbo button and your car leaps foward.

Hitting other cars seems to be impossible to avoid as there are so many on the road and you're going too fast anyway to get out of their way.



▲ *The felon is arrested.*



▲ *Smash that Countach!*


▲ *At the start of the chase.*

▼ *Chase HQ.*



With only 60 seconds in which to make an arrest, your work is cut out. And the other penalty is that you can only use your turbo three times on any one chase. This boosts your speed for five seconds.

To slow them down you've got to bump them several times. I found crashing into them more effective, though if you collide too hard you'll spin and like as not lose them again.

Crunch! A grinding smack into their rear and both cars slew across the road. "Oh man – hit him more! One more time!" screams your partner as you line up for another jarring collision. Smoke spews from the back of the white sports car as it draws ahead again. Hitting the turbo you hit the gas, colliding into its rear again and again. Now flames join the black smoke and the chase is nearly over. One more time and it grinds to a halt. You race past, jam on your brakes and turn sideways to block its path.

The two cops stroll out of their black sports car and drag the stunned robbers out of theirs. Rights are read at gunpoint and you've made it to the end of one hell of a successful day.

Nancy soon calls in again. This time it's Carlos, the New York armed robber making his getaway in a yellow sports car.

At last! A racing game with something more to do than just whizzing round a track to beat the course time. Fast and challenging with great graphics, if not entirely original, and good clear sound effects, Chase HQ is definitel/ a winner.

E ACTION



▲ *Is it a bird?*



▲ *Is it a plane?*



▲ *No!*

SUPERMAN

Metropolis. The streets are quiet as a large, rather earnest looking man strides past, his suit jacket flapping in the wind. Suddenly danger threatens, what type he doesn't know but in a flash the suit is gone and in its place stands the pantied protector.

Yep! Superman is back, thanks to DC Comics and Taito.

And what's amiss is a bunch of green humanoids, sent from God knows where, to keep Superman on this toes. Fists strike out and Boomf! an alien goes flying. Another hovers in to take his place. Within seconds the area just above street level is filled with the things, attacking Superman from front, back and below. A well placed kick cripples those who float in at knee level. A well timed punch gets rid of most of the others.

Then a different breed creep in. Metallic lifeforms which need more than a swift blow to dispatch them.

The humanoids soon give way to their leader, a monstrous green hulk. Bunching up his fists until one starts to pound and glow, Superman lets loose a flying ball of energy which hits the hulk where it hurts. The hulk fades for a moment and Superman steps in for the kill. Kicking over a dustbin on the way he collects the bonus pick-up left behind and with the extra energy charges in to finish off the giant. Dwarfed by the monster he pummels it in the stomach. It doubles up and . . . suddenly it's all over. The streets are clear from the time being at least.

The scene now changes to the horizontal as Superman flies high above the tallest skyscraper, the buildings in the background resembling a vast concrete forest. Huge boulders hurtle past him to destroy the sleeping city far below. Lasers streak out of Superman's eyes, heating the boulders until they explode as molten rock. More and more boulders appear and just when Superman is ready to accept defeat, steel girders rise up in his flight path. No time to dodge them. Energy balls shoot from his fists, lasers burn into steel and the top row is demolished. Superman flies on.

Dodging up and down, eyes blazing he turns his attention on the chopper. It explodes with a huge burst of flame and for an instant the skies are clear.

Superman relaxes and then stiffens in outrage. More boulders fall and now there's danger from a huge space craft. Only one way to destroy this monster, and that's to shoot directly into the cabin, a narrow opening.

Dodging all the laser bolts is virtually impossible and the hero's strength is failing. He flickers more now and suddenly it's all over. Superman, mortally wounded, flies back from a direct hit and disappears.

However, there's always another life, and within seconds, he's back filled with renewed energy and determination. The spacecraft starts to flicker and the damage increases until the controls are smashed. It blows up and Superman lands having once more done his thankless duty.

Then the second level starts. There's much more of the same, with a few changes in attackers and background. But the general layout remains. First the street scene, where the original attackers are joined by the Spiderman who breathes out webs of disaster, attempting to entangle Superman in a superstrong net.

Each successive level gets harder. You're going to need as many energy pick-ups as you can. So kick clear any obstruction on the ground as there might or might not be something there. The game does become repetitive as each new level is so similar to the one before. However, the same can be said of most arcade games. The animation and graphics are excellent and if you're playing in two player mode it's an awful lot more fun as you can take on the enemy together.

▼ *It's Superman!*



continued ▶

Arcade Action



▲ *Stab 'n' slice in Ninja Spirit.*

NINJA SPIRIT

You're going to need super fast reflexes to win through Ninja Spirit from Irem – an addictive offering with some of the smoothest and most professionally drawn graphics I've seen in a long time.

The game starts off in a forest, huge trees towering over you. Under you is a low platform with the ground beneath.

There's a weapons selector at the bottom of the screen and your weapons can be changed by hitting one of the fire buttons to select the right one. It's actually quite simple, just select a weapon – sword, shuriken, explosives or boomerang and use the other firebutton to operate them.

You're hardly given a moment to breathe in the forest before the enemy approach from behind and in front, while others perch in the lower branches of the trees firing missiles down on you. A malevolent little devil rises out of the ground beneath the platform and tracks your progress. Should he catch up he'll thrust his sword through the boards killing you outright.

Puffs of smoke herald the appearance of more of the tree based enemy. To knock them off their perches use the shuriken or boomerang. Kill enough of the enemy and an orb will be left. Depending on its colour, you'll either be awarded a protective device which spews out from your sword in a swirling circle, or extra men who follow doggedly in your footsteps, copying your every action at a staggered rate.

Your journey soon takes you over a narrow rope bridge where



▲ *Ninja Spirit.*

you're a sitting target. You definitely need to have one of the many bonus shields at this point, whether it's they're swirling ars from your sword or semi-circles of flame which spin round you protectively. A few guardians help as well. The ability to jump higher is another bonus and will be needed in the next section when you come up against an alien who's about three times larger than you.

As you travel further into the forest, you'll have to walk between two chimneys. As you pass the first they burst into action belching out hordes of attacking enemy. The skies are filled with aliens as they drop to the ground, missiles shoot through the air and you have to be very fast to get out of this one alive. Some nifty finger work is needed here.

The obligatory end of level monster soon appears, rising out of the ground, and going up and up. It's huge and looks like apainting of some God. You come up to knee level and you're expected to destroy it. Great.

Further levels take you out of the forest into open grassland, wading across rivers and at all times being attacked by the enemy.

You'll find Ninja Spirit instantly addictive. Fast reflexes to show off your skill and the knack of choosing the right weapon to deal with the enemy. It's one of the best games of this type I've seen for a long time.

NINJA KAZAN

Ninja versus Indians! This unlikely story of a Ninja fighting for his life in the Wild West is about the most bizarre I've come across.

Imagine the picture. The desert with mighty rocky crags filling the horizon, the odd cactus perched in the foreground when a Ninja warrior swans into view. No wonder the Indians get upset. Out come the war axes, the knives and bows and arrows, and they leap to the attack.

Besides there are a lot of treasure chest strewn around, each filled with jewels and bonus points which need to be protected from the sword waving Ninja.

Sword fighting is what this game's about though you use it in more of a stabbing motion like a dagger. Just wait till an injun gets too close, hit the button and your sword jabs out to lay him flat. This gets the Indians mad. They attack in groups, singly and occasionally send in some sort of wizard to get you the hell out of their territory. You're there for the booty and whatever lies in those sturdy little chests. Magic can be picked up and you'll be able to cast explosive bursts at your enemy, though for the most part you'll have to rely on your own trusty sword.

Arrows point you in the direction of the most chests, up sheer rock faces, then onto floating ledges where you'll need to jump to get from one to another, over waterfalls and eventually into Roman times.

Jumping can be tricky. To get the height you've to lean on the jump button and this leaves you vulnerable for a split second.

There isn't much to hold your attention in this game. It's repetitive and even in the later levels, strolling along the seafront being attacked by Romans isn't much more fun.

▼ *Ninja Kazan battles in the wild west.*



▼ *Injuns and Ninjas: not a good mix.*



ARCADE ACTION

In the first of a regular monthly feature, C + VG reports on where you can find the best arcades in Britain. If you think your town or city – coastal or inland – deserves a mention, write in to: ARCADE REPORT, C + VG, PRIORY COURT, 30-32 FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON EC1R 3AU enclosing details of all the arcades in your area, and a street map if possible. If your report gets printed, you'll win a fabulous C + VG T-shirt.

This month Julian Rignall sings the praises of his new home town, Brighton and reveals his favourite haunts.

If you ever visit Brighton and fancy an arcade crawl, your best bet is to head for West Street, where five arcades reside within a couple of hundred yards of one another.

At the north end of the street is Regency Leisure, an excellent arcade boasting a great selection of games. Highlights include Galaxy Force, Operation Wolf, Vindicator, Toobin', Pacmania, R-Type, Dragon Ninja as well as a good range of golden oldies.

A little further down the road is Galaxy, boasting some new games like Continental Circus, F1-Dream, P-47 and some great classics like R-Type, Halley's Comet and Slap Fight.

Crystal Rooms is also worth a visit, with Main Event amongst a plethora of old and new titles and a couple of pool tables.

Amusements is a great disappointment after the previous places, and has a pitiful range of games – the Main Event being the newest one by years! The rest of the games are poor, and the arcade is hardly worth visiting, unless you want to play fruit machines, of which there are plenty.

Nearest to the beach is the Leisure Centre, a large arcade with a good line of games. Vindicator, Xybots, P-47, Continental Circus, Operation Wolf, Vulcan Venture and a well-stocked Playchoice Ten are found among some great older titles like Nemesis, Salamander, Pacland and Bubble Bobble.

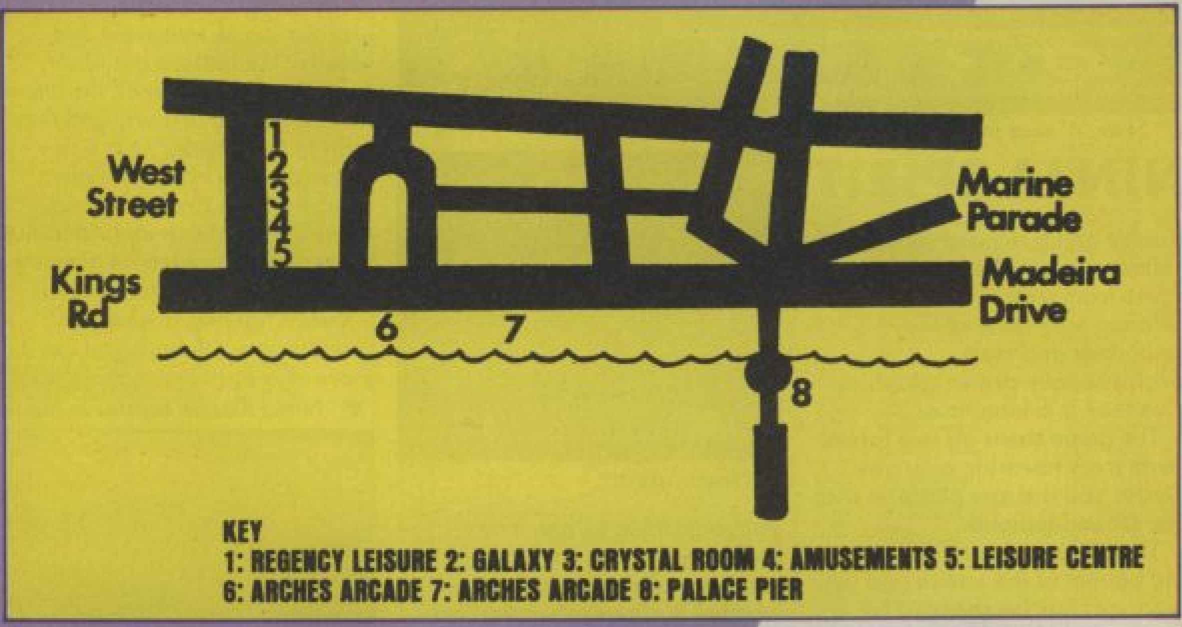
There are two arcades situated at the edge of the beach under the Arches, but neither are particularly. Penny falls and fruit machines are to the fore, and what games on offer are neither exciting or in good repair.

The best place of all – and it's my second home – is the Palace Pier, complete with two huge arcades. The selection of games is absolutely incredible, and I rate it as one of the best arcades in Britain (and I've been to a lot)! As well as having just about every new game available, it also has a marvellous selection of classic and rare videos from the last decade.

New games include two Main Events, Sky Ranger, Vindicator, POW, Ninja Spirit, Cabal, five Operation Wolfs (or should that be Wolves?), Toobin', Pacmania, a deluxe Galaxy Force, Continental Circus, Konami '88, Chopper 4, Twin Eagles, Vulcan Venture and P-47. Hydraulic delights abound with two Outruns, two Space Harriers and a Top Speed.

The selection of older games is second-to-none, with all three Star Wars, Marble Madness, SDI, Time Scanner, Discs of Tron, Gaplus, Commando, Buggy Boy, TX-1, Pole Position I and II, Pacland, PacMan, Space Invaders, Double Dragon, Spy Hunter II, Bionic Commando, Nemesis, Salamander, Flying Shark, Slap Fight, Tiger Road and Star Force among a plethora of others.

So, if you're an arcade addict, Brighton is an ideal place to spend time and money – and if you're heading for the pier, make sure you're well stocked with change!



NEWS

ATARI PREPARE ASSAULT

Assault is a brand new Atari title, and is set to invade the arcades over the following months. Originally designed by Namco, it's a tank combat game with several new twists.

The player takes control of the tank in question and guides it around a multidirectionally scrolling landscape in search of enemy targets, which should be destroyed in no uncertain terms. The objective on each level is to destroy the enemy fortress, whereupon the tank is driven to exit to the next level. There are also Lift Zones on each level which give the tank temporary flight, allowing the player to run reconnaisace and bombing missions.

Atari are also putting the finishing touches to a new robotic football game called Cyberball. Details are very scarce at the moment, and it doesn't look as though the game will appear in the UK until early next year.

WILLIAMS SET TO RETURN

Williams Electronics, famous for their early 80's classics such as Defender, Stargate, Jouset and Robotron 2084 are ready to return to the coin-op scene with a system that they've been developing for the last three years.

The system is yet to be named, but Williams are confident that it's better than anything else currently on the market, and apparently it offers higher resolution and more colours than any other video game. The first game will appear towards the middle of next year – we wait with baited breath.

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Out To Lunch

John Minson struggles manfully with his PC Show hangover, and ruminates on the evils of chain stores, identikit product and . . . Kylie Minogue? This is truly the column the stars all talk about.

We're deadline surfing yet again. A combination of post PC Show blues and grey autumn weather means this column is going to be very late. What is it about this time of year that makes me want to jet off to somewhere as warm as a C64's power supply?

But self pity isn't going to fill the page, so I'd better power up the imagination and lash together yet more of those bad-ass opinions which have led several major software houses to take out contracts on my life. Now, who should I slag off this month? Ah yes, I know.

Shops! No, come back, guys – this really is going to be interesting. After all, unless you buy all your software by post, at one stage or another you're going to come into contact with your friendly neighbourhood retailer, just waiting to relieve you of your nine ninety-nine . . . or more if you're a 16-bit, rich bastard.

Not much Minson can whinge about shops, is there? Think again, squidlips! What started me pondering this particular topic was the great Microprose American jaunt. You see, it wasn't all business, and Major Bill and the boys being perfect hosts, they decided to introduce us visitors to 'The American Way'.

Now T.A.W. doesn't just mean watching Baltimore Orioles baseball team ruin their reputation by actually winning a game or enjoying a Sunday brunch of crab omelette in Annapolis. No, it also means partaking of America's national sport – shopping! And, in Baltimore at least, shopping means driving out to the local mall.

How to describe a shopping mall. Put all ideas of Arndales and Shopping Cities out of your mind. A mall is a mini town in itself – and all of it dedicated to consumerism. There are even aisles filled with every sort of fast food you can think of. Bung in a maternity ward and an undertakers and you could live there.

The first reaction of the average limey, judging by our select bunch of journos, is for the eyes to glaze over and the wallet to go into overdrive. You don't realise how much you need a three inch tall, friction drive skateboarder until you find one in a toy shop! But once



▲ *John Minson's pin-up of the month no 1: Kylie Minogue.*

the initial fever has abated – usually around the same stage that you find you've just blown all your dollars on musical coffee mugs, mini baseball bats and the like – you start to take a more scientific approach to shopping.

This is when you wander into the computer store, to check out the situation and . . . what the heck!!! The selection of software could send you into a catatonic trance if you're not prepared. There's none of the top ten games mentality you find at home. Here, if you want a program, you'll probably find it lurking somewhere on the racks.

Once, long ago in the early boom years, the pundits used to peddle a line that home computing was going to be like the record industry. Strange to say the BBC still hasn't given us Top of the Software Pops, but in one respect the comparison has proved accurate. In Britain the main software outlets, the chain stores, tend to stock what is popular. Or, to put it an other way, as the chain stores account for the majority of software sales, what they stock tends to be popular.

Do you see a pattern behind all of this? I sure do! Like Paul Weller once sang, 'The public wants what the public gets.' If your selection is limited to arcade tie ins from the major labels on a few machines, you're unlikely to pick up a strategy game programmed in somebody's back bedroom for the Apple II. That sort of thing just doesn't fit the store's preconceptions of what you, the punter, want.

It's like going into your local Smirks record department and asking for the latest single by your favourite Solihull surf band, released on their own label. ''No, but we've got Kylie Minogue.'' Well, I've had Kylie Minogue to the back teeth – and I've also had enough of sub-standard games from the favoured few labels, who continue to sell junk in bulk, just because the start young buyers in their business suits still smile on them.

Some more questions. Ever wonder why virtually all computer games come in the same sort of box? It's because those self-same buyers insist on uniform packaging, so that they'll fit onto all those neat, tidy racks. It's the same with pricing. Conformity is the other of the day. The £17 game in the custom designed box has a hard fight if it's going to get into the high street.

So what's the answer? Well, way back when there were lots of little independent computer shops, with Orics and Dragons with bits of wire sticking out of them, and friendly, enthusiastic staff, who probably also owned the place and could tell you what was new and whether you'd like it. Then the big boys saw that there was money to be made . . . Sorry – then the industry 'matured' and got organised and nowadays the person who cashes up your purchase was probably selling singles by (yes) Kylie Minogue last week.

Not that the 'Mom and Pop' independents mean that much in the States any more either. But in the country where the corporation is king, the chains of software shops have made a much better effort to provide a variety of titles, spanning everything from arcade to simulation. Without this open-mindedness there wouldn't be the diversity that makes the American market so exciting.

Without wishing to turn this into too much of a history lesson, it's worth remembering the fears of an 'American invasion' that sent shivers through the industry four years ago. Today Microprose, Electronic Arts and Activision all have a considerable chunk of the market because, for much of the time, they provide something different from the run of the mill.

Now news reaches us that one of the Stateside software chains is to set up in the UK. Will it hurt British retailers? I don't know – but if it means the ability to walk into a store and buy the program I want, not the one some buyer thinks I do, I'll welcome it.

Ten pounds is not a small amount of money. You should be able to decide how you spend it so don't let the big boys dictate. Support your local software store – or anywhere else that gives you a real choice and remember – in this industry, variety is vitality. Buy the same old game again and again and all you'll get is bored!

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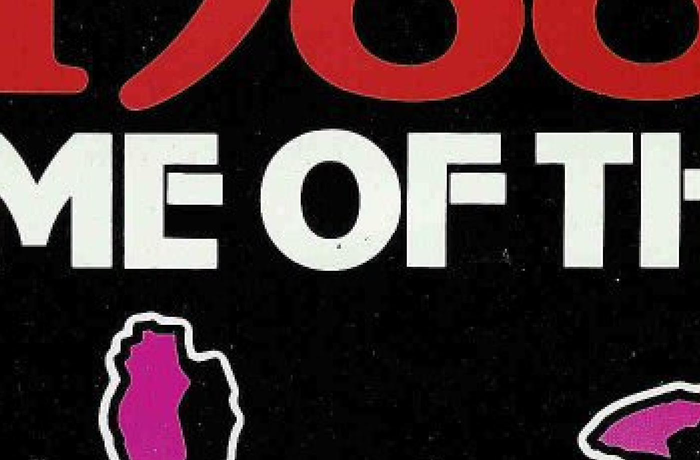
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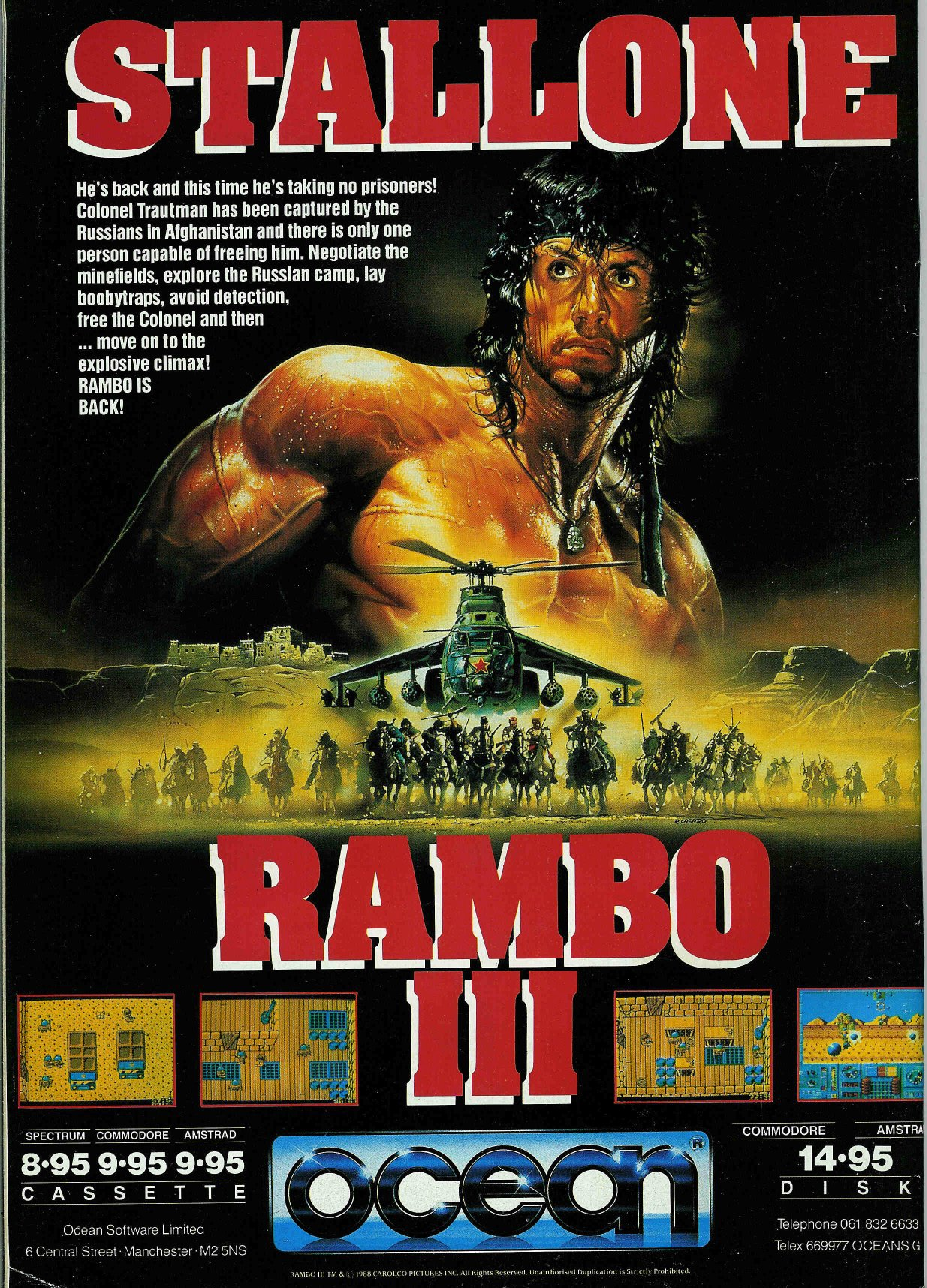
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